



THOMPSON<sup>THE</sup>  
DETECTIVE  
JUNIOUS L. HEMPSTEAD





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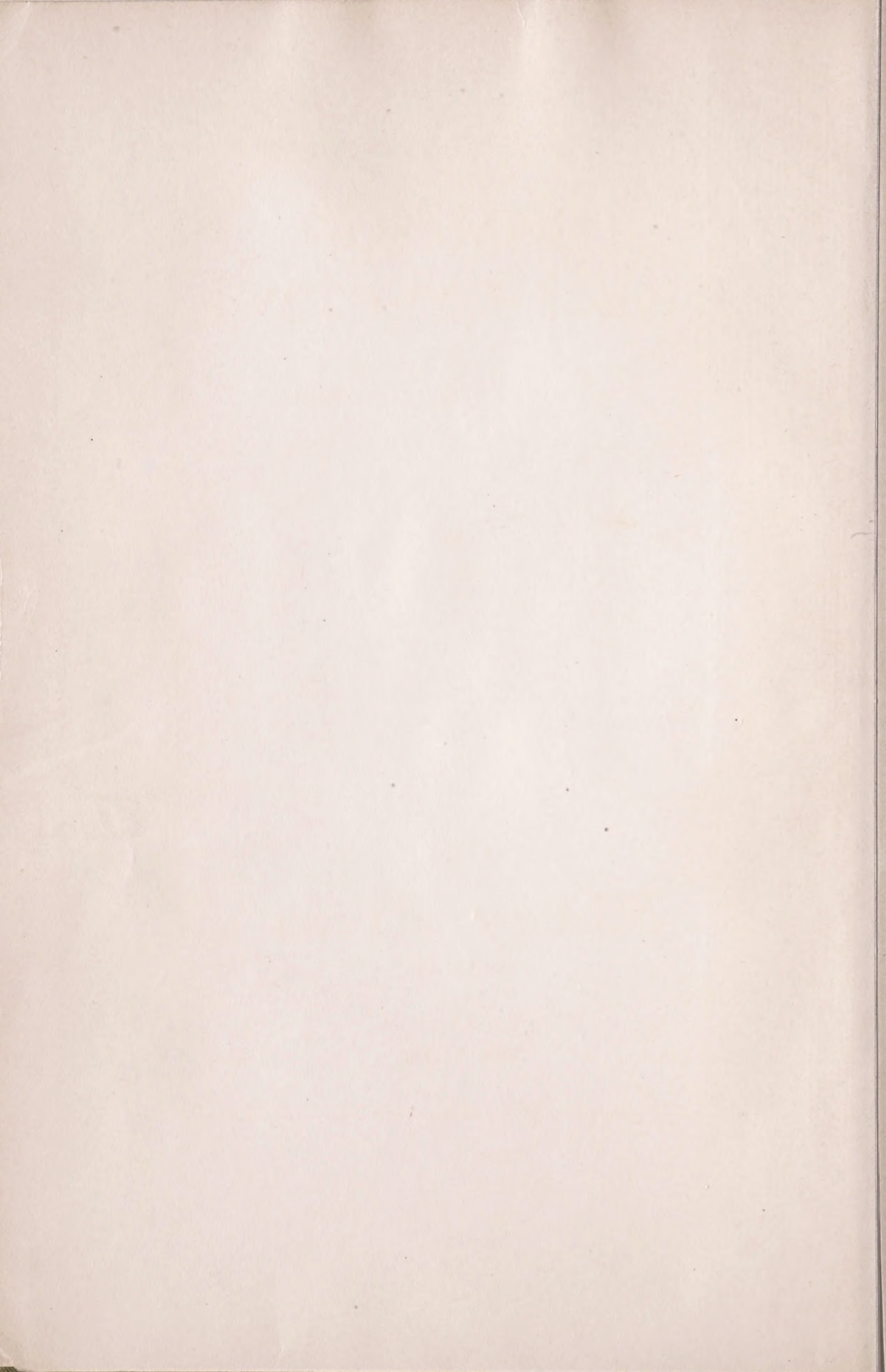
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# THOMPSON, THE DETECTIVE

A Thrilling Story of Adventure

BY  
JUNIUS L. HEMPSTEAD

“Man’s inhumanity to man,  
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

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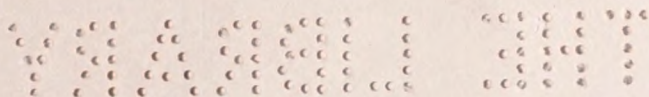
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# Thompson, the Detective.

## ON THE TRACK.

The great business house of ——— stood full ten stories high; its marble facade was somber with its darkness. The office in the rear of the building was cozy because the weather outside was raw and winterish. The soft light of two argand burners made objects dimly visible in the space outside the heavy walnut railing, a cheerful fire in the grate reflected its blaze from the decorated walls, whose pictures were the crowning glory of American advertising.

The ticking of the great clock never disturbed the concentrated thought of the book-keeper, as it travelled from page to page, where long rows of shapely figures represented the prosperity, that was builded upon a credit basis. The hypothecated notes became so many little slaves to swell the bank's dividends. A line of discount was the lever that oiled the hinges of trade.

With an impatient slam, Harry Monteet closed the large Russian bound ledger, and peered



at the gloom outside. The street was deserted; not even a policeman was visible. The green and red lights of half a dozen saloons struggled through the drizzle of a bleak November night.

"Bad weather, bad weather," exclaimed the young man. "I am due at Madam ——'s reception, to-night. I was sensible enough to end my invitation to Miss Blanche with a D. V. and rain permitting. These fashionable entertainments make a beastly hole in my salary, hack hire, bouquets, bon bons, etc."

He covered the bed of glowing embers, turned off the gas, and quitted the office. The keen blasts that struck him full in the face, caused him to button up his great coat to the chin. His quick steps echoed along the sidewalks until he brought up sharply in front of a brilliantly lighted saloon, where the clicking of ivory balls and the subdued hum of voices stole upon the stillness of the street.

He quickly closed the doors behind him and passed to the rear, where he joined the group at the billiard table; the moments passed pleasantly because he was playing pool. He glanced at the face of his watch, the hour was three in the morning. A glass of beer all around, and the friends separated. Is it any wonder that he was pale? The broad intelligent forehead was white as marble, the colorless cheeks were transparent, the blood-



less lips were concealed by a dark mustache. He was the last to leave. As he passed out of the entrance a touch on his arm detained him, and a strangely familiar voice greeted him with:

"Sir, pardon the liberty, are you not Harry Monteet?"

"Yes, that is my name."

"I knew your father very well; a more honorable, high toned gentleman never lived. I ascertained you were in the city, but I could not locate you."

"It is late, how can I serve you?"

"You mean it is early. Loan me twenty dollars. I will return the amount in thirty days. I am a stranger in the city, without one cent in my pocket."

Harry looked intently into his honest, gray eyes, and still more honest face. Somehow the past lived again in his rugged features, and with some hesitation he replied: "I do not know you."

"I know you; I have seen you in the fields holding down a plow; you do not look so healthy now. A little country air would help you, my lad."

"Here goes; I don't believe I will ever see you again." He gave one look at the truthful gray eyes which were moist with gratitude, and continued: "Pardon me, my rude speech has



wounded you. Keep the bill, it will be all right if you never return the amount."

"I do not consider this loan as a gift. I will certainly keep my promise because I have employment that will pay me well in the future; the salary will be slow at the start, but it will come. It will come; you have Thompson's word for security."

"What is the nature of your business?"

"To-morrow, I will be a full fledged detective; if shrewd Scottish wit, backed by Irish tact, wins not the day, then am I a fool."

"Meet me, to-morrow night; I will be here at ten. I have many questions to ask you of F——. I have been absent so long that my very name is only a distant memory."

"You mistake, Harry; your playmates remember you with affection."

"Four o'clock and not a minute less," exclaimed the young man; "I have to be in the office by eight, sharp. Here is my address, give me yours. I arrived only to-day; how fortunate I am, otherwise I should have slept in charity's bed."

At ten o'clock the following night, they were seated at one of the tables in the saloon. Their sociability increased with every additional glass of beer, which washed down the cheese and crackers. Mr. Thompson's voice was keyed to a



confidential whisper, as he remarked: "Do you know, Harry, why I chose the hazardous calling that will pay me a fortune if I succeed? If I lose, well I am no worse off than I was before I secured the agency."

While the detective was talking, his keen gray eyes were searching for the first link in the chain of evidence in his companion's soul. One by one he recalled from the past Harry's school-day play-mates. Critically he noted the pose of the book-keeper's expression, as he dwelt upon the especial traits of juvenile character that no restraint of later years could change.

A pleasant warmth crept into the detective's heart. Madge was still the idol in Harry's heart; years had dimmed the first impulses of love, the memory was still a cherished dream, the doubts and misgivings were entirely removed from Mr. Thompson's mind. "I am sure Madge loves you, my boy, because she came to find employment, hoping to receive some help from you."

"Help from me," exclaimed the accountant. "I have not seen her since I said good-bye, at the railroad station in F——."

"Nevertheless she has been in the city ever since that day. Without relatives, in a modern Babylon, Mr. Thompson, I fear the worst."

"Harry, do you know that the gossips of your



native village have connected your name with her mysterious disappearance?"

"Liars!" exclaimed Harry, excitedly. "I would have shielded her good name with my life."

"Now you know why I am here, to vindicate your honor, for your father's sake. I am here to find Madge, and by God's good help I will do so or lose my life in the attempt."

Harry's mind was filled with nameless alarms. So many temptations surrounded Madge; her beauty, her inexperience, were snares for the fowler. Mr. Thompson did not interrupt his train of thought. The young man's thoughts were echoes of his own thoughts. The difficulties of the situation were formidable because the lapse of time complicated the mystery of her disappearance. The silence was painful, until Harry in an agitated tone of voice asked:

"What line of action do you propose to pursue?"

"You know that I am a stranger in the city, and must depend largely upon the generosity of your purse," replied the detective.

"Any amount within reason, Mr. Thompson; you know I am only a book-keeper."

"It will not require a large sum of money; mind you, I only ask you to loan me the currency I need for my present expenses."

"Command me in a modest way, and when



you find the trail, drop me a post-card; I will meet you here."

The shrewd Scotchman did not impart to his companion the whereabouts of Madge's aunt, because he was not really certain that she resided in the city; neither did he wish to place Harry in a false position so far as the girl was concerned. With a patience rivaling Job's he searched the city directory for the names of some persons that came from F——, and now located within the city's limits.

A single name rewarded his effort. His eyes beamed with intelligence as the name of Peter T—— arrested his attention. A scheming limb of the law who was always willing to take a shady case, providing the retaining fee was paid in advance.

The next day he mounted the steep flight of steps that led to the advocate's office. The busy greenbags was writing a brief, and with an impatient wave of his hand seated the detective. The brief was far from being a brief, if one might judge by the number of sheets, and the time it consumed to prepare the same. When the aforesaid brief was folded and placed under a paper weight, a brusque voice inquired: "Well, sir, state your case as speedily as you can, for time is money to me."

"I wish to trace a title to some lands in the village of F——," explained the visitor, "here



are the papers." With a keen scent for the trail the detective noticed the changed expression of the face, with a slight tremor of the hands that were extended to receive the faded deeds.

The aforesaid Peter T—— read with nervous energy the document that had been pigeon-holed for many years. Some reassurance came to his mind as he proceeded. The detective noted with pleasure the softening of the lines on his forehead, as he returned the legally correct instrument to the owner and said:

"It will take more time than the case is worth to trace back the title to the original owners. Time is money to me, sir;" then he repeated the word money several times in quick succession, and stood with his back to the bookcase, with his glances cast in the direction of the door, a gentle hint that the detective was unwilling to accept.

"Mr. T——, what would you advise in the premises? Who are the witnesses to the deed? Perhaps I could get some information from them that would be of benefit to me."

The wily lawyer gave a quick, penetrating look in the would-be client's face that allayed the momentary suspicion. He turned the leaves rapidly until he reached the last page. When he came to the name of Madam V., another stealthy sidewise glance was fruitless; the countenance of Mr. Thompson was as innocent as the face of a



child. An inquiring gaze that was almost simple unto imbecility queried:

"Sir, could you direct me to some other lawyer who would be willing to take my business? Surely there must be something worthy of investigation."

"Some of the witnesses are still living," replied the advocate. "Madam V. keeps a boarding house on West ——— street. I do not know the number on the house."

"I thank you for the information. I am on my way to the village of F.; a letter from you, or the Madam, would be very acceptable."

"Not from me, sir; not from me. I will, however, oblige you by giving you the Madam's address."

The attorney refused the proffered fee, and with a relieved sigh repeated slowly: "Time is money! money!" The detective descended slowly the flight of steps; an inward glow of satisfaction made his heart beat faster.

"Better than I hoped for," he muttered; "the old villain did not recognize me; two valuable points in the game to my score. Well! well! I have a specimen of his hand writing that will be valuable to me, later. I have the Madam's address, I know that both of these worthies have not been to F——— for a long time."

"He glanced at the face of his timepiece and



boarded a car for the up town district. The number was rusted. He glanced sharply at the brown stone front from which the paint had disappeared. The inside blinds were closed, the door plate had been removed, a general air of neglect made him hesitate, as he touched the electric button that gave no sound.

"Ah! old lawbags, you intentionally misled me as sure as my name is Thompson; I will outwit you; I have yet four hours of daylight."

He took from his pocket a memorandum book and noted therein the name of the real estate agent. Without loss of a moment he returned to the heart of the city and entered the handsomely furnished apartments of the firm he was looking for.

The number of house seekers were comfortably seated in the richly upholstered armchairs. Mr. Thompson listened to the various complaints that were poured into the patient ears of the affable agent. His glances were quick to notice that the largest number of applicants were boarding house keepers—the class of ladies he wished most to cultivate; none of these could furnish the desired information. When his turn came, with a directness that was business like, he said:

"I am a stranger in the city looking for an investment; would you permit me to examine your list of desirable property?"



"With pleasure, be seated at this table. here is the list."

Several long sheets were fastened at the top with a patent clip. Deliberately he turned a page at a time and closely scanned the columns, until the last customer retired; the number and street were plainly marked, the absence of blue check marks indicated that the property was undesirable.

The pleasant voice of the agent recalled the detective from the train of reasoning that shrewdly surmised that No. — had been vacant a very long time.

"Have you found anything to suit you, sir?"

"If I buy I shall expect a bargain. I note the absence of check marks on this list; the two first pages are pretty well scored with them; please to give me the desired information."

"The minus dash after each residence is a private ear mark of our own; we make it a consideration in a deal, because the property is undesirable. The check mark indicates that the houses are either rented or sold."

"Why are they classed as undesirable?" queried the detective. "Here is a house that would suit my purposes excellently well, hot and cold baths, with all modern improvements."

"We have other realty more desirable," he replied. "That number is an unlucky number."



A lady by the name of Madam V. purchased the same, and could not meet the monthly installments. A dozen of landladies have looked over the premises. A superstition haunts the place like the shadow of a ghost, because those who ventured with boarders were sold out by the sheriff."

"It is a foolish superstition," exclaimed Mr. Thompson.

"Not so foolish as you imagine. There is folk lore, and fairy lore, and boarding house lore; for the latter reason the house has been vacant for five or six years."

The detective held back the question that impulsively came to his lips, and with an indifferent manner remarked: "The place seems reasonably cheap; let me have the keys and I will return them to-morrow."

"We require some reference," the agent said.

"Certainly, perfectly proper. Do you know my friend Harry Monteet, who is confidential book-keeper for the firm of ——?"

"Quite well; they say he is going to marry the head proprietor's daughter; a fine young man, but a little wild." He did not see the paleness that came like a flash to Mr. Thompson's face, and as quickly disappeared.

While the agent was using the telephone the stranger recovered his composure. The keys



were placed in his hand; with a courteous good evening, he bowed himself out of the office.

The following day he mounted the dusty flight of steps of Number —. A feeling of secret satisfaction strengthened his resolve, as he fitted each particular key to each particular lock. Every scrap of paper was vigilantly scrutinized. One by one he filed the precious bits of paper in his leather pocket book. Severely worded duns to non-paying boarders, scented choicely constructed sentences, requesting the favor of a small loan; grocer's bills that were not receipted, came into his possession. His eager fingers clutched the scattered pieces of a photograph. Patiently he matched the parts. Poor Madge looked up at him with her great, pleading eyes. There was an anxious expression that smote him sharply. The Madam must have been in a violent mood when she tore the picture into fragments. Thus a small part of her life history came into his keeping.

With steadfast patience he tramped from grocery to grocery, produced billheads, and sought the information he desired. The firm of ——— looked carefully over the old accounts and sharply asked:

“Why do you wish to know? Is she a relative of yours?”

---



"Not exactly. I have some business with her that is pressing."

"Any money in it?" eagerly exclaimed the merchant.

"There may be. Why do you ask?"

He said something to one of the clerks, who quitted the office speedily and returned. The answer was satisfactory; the young man handed the detective a card. The grocer turned to his desk and with a brusque good day intimated that the interview was ended.

"At last, Madam, I have you in my grasp; here is your little card. I wonder if she will recognize me after the lapse of so many years. I must move cautiously; she is a shrewd, sharp woman whose wits have been sharpened by adversity. I will see Harry, to-night.

At ten o'clock sharp, he sauntered into the saloon and seated himself in one of the leather-bound chairs. His success was phenomenal. When Harry finished the game of pool, he excused his withdrawal by a slight movement of his hand in the direction of his friend. When they were comfortably seated at the far end of the room, the young man exclaimed: "What luck did you have, Mr. Thompson? I ask you this question because your face is as passive as the features of a marble statue."

"For two days I have been on the trail. I



have located the Madam; here is her card, congratulate me."

The accountant placed the bit of paste-board in the palm of his hand, spelled slowly each word. In an absent-minded way he returned the card without a single remark; an awkward silence followed this motion. While the detective placed the valuable piece of information in his memorandum book, he coughed slightly. Harry was all attention, as he spoke in a low voice: "Forgive me, my friend; I was trying to recall a circumstance that happened five or six years ago."

"Can you refresh your memory? It will aid me very much in my investigation."

"I fear the worst," the young man exclaimed; "I saw a picture that reminded me very much of Madge in the possession of as grand a rouse as ever walked the streets."

"Was it like this? I found this portrait in a pile of rubbish in a vacant house once occupied by the Madam." The old man had carefully matched the fragments, and strengthened the back by pasting a piece of transparent paper over the writing on the reverse side.

The accountant looked long and earnestly at the girlish face that once was so dear to him. "They were the happiest days of my life," he sighed. "Here it is strain, strain; sometimes I



think the pressure must make me a madman, or a thief."

"Never a thief, my boy. It is not in your blood. I believe such weaknesses are due to the force of circumstances. We blame the moral side of a man's nature for what was bred by pride."

"Mr. Thompson, what induced you to seek the thankless position of a detective?" While Harry asked the question he fixed his honest gaze full on the countenance of his companion.

"To find Madge; what other business would bring me here?"

"Would it not be well to let the past sleep forever? If she has drifted into the stream of vice, I, for one, do not wish to know it."

A pained expression swept over the face of Mr. Thompson as he replied: "Harry, I thought you were made of better stuff; you look at the darkest side. Then you are unwilling to aid me in this praiseworthy undertaking?"

"I did not say so. I love Madge with all the old time love, and if she is in the city I will help you to find the dear girl, God bless her."

"Is your love for the daughter of your employer so strong that it will cause you to break the promise you once made to your first love?"

"How do you know that I made a promise, Mr. Thompson? Who are you and where did you come from?"



“Don’t let a money consideration influence the nobler side of your nature, Harry. If we can find the dear girl, and you will marry her, you will be wealthy enough to own three large houses, each one grander than the one that buries you alive.”

“If Madge has fallen, what then? Would you as my father’s friend ask me to make such a sacrifice?”

“Let us be sure that she has gone to the bad, then I will give you my answer. Why do you take such a gloomy view of the situation, Harry?”

“Because the Madam is crooked, so I have heard. If Madge sought the protection of such a relative, I certainly have reason to fear the worst. Can you blame me for my doubts?”

“Not for a moment, Harry; suspend judgment until I make a full report. The girl had a head of her own, her Scottish blood and training must count for something.”

“Suppose she has changed her name? Your undertaking is herculean. If you succeed in locating her I will promise to do my part, but do not ask me to do the house of illfame act. You know the world winks at a small dose of vice; a larger dose nauseates; I would lose my position.”

“I do not ask you to make such a sacrifice,



my boy. Advance me the small amounts I may need; I will do the work."

"You have carte blanche to draw on me for any reasonable amount. Do you need a further sum, to-night?"

"I have more than half the amount that you loaned to me. I fear the Madam; my disguise must be perfect; her sharp eyes must be blinded, else will all my labor be for naught."

"I have a closet in my room where you can conceal your wigs, costumes and weapons; here is a duplicate key to my den. You can sleep there if you so desire."

"I must not be seen in your company again. This saloon is too public. You will meet me often, Harry; everything will be false about me except my manhood and my heart. Should I pass you on the sidewalk, or wish to speak to you, I will make this movement with my hand; all depends upon your silence."

The detective gazed with solicitude at the retreating figure. "Silence," he repeated reflectively to himself. "I might have spared myself the trouble of such an admonition. I have not gained one bit of information from his lips. He was as mute as an oyster when he handed me the Madam's card. An unprincipled woman is the meanest of all God's creations; perhaps she has the boy in her power, who can tell? who can tell?"



## CHAPTER II.

### INTERVIEWS THE MADAM.

When the accountant was out of sight, Mr. Thompson lighted a fresh cigar and strolled to the piers where steamers and sailing vessels were loading and unloading. He had been a sailor himself; the great ocean with its craft was more agreeable to him than his new position.

The next morning he reported to the detective agency. The superintendent examined closely his credentials. A low whistle from the officer was the only comment. He returned the credentials to Mr. Thompson, and added: "You are playing for a big game; here is luck to you."

When he quitted the agency he boarded the electric railway, and reached the crossing, which he followed to Z—— street, and turned to the left. The building he sought was easy to locate, because it was so near the center of the block; it had once been a palatial residence for some merchant prince, whose wealth increased so rapidly that the dignity of his position could not be satisfied with such plebeian quarters. The



brown stone front had weathered badly, and was dingy in the extreme. The polished silver door-plate had long since given place to a gilt lettered sign, which read as follows: "Boarders accommodated at reasonable rates."

The musical vibrations of a gong brought a servant to the door who received his card and seated him in the parlor. The once gaudy upholstery of the furniture looked distressingly seedy; the faded carpet was worn threadbare, the bric-a-brac had a second-hand appearance. An album of photographs pleaded invitingly for an inspection. He carefully replaced the album just as he found it. The naturally suspicious disposition of the Madam was a memory from which there was no escape.

An elderly lady with a careworn boarding-house expression in her eyes, and a shadowy bill-collector face, glided into the room, her feet encased in carpet slippers, the rustle of her skirts the only sound that warned him of her presence.

A gleam of satisfaction lighted for a moment his bronzed face. These evidences of poverty were so many little signboards, to bring hope to his heart; the scheming designs of the Madam had failed to accomplish the desired end. "Not too late," mentally flashed into his brain, as he turned to her and politely said:

"Madam V., I believe."



"Yes, sir; pray be seated."

His keen glances read her inmost thoughts. His disguise was perfect. With a thankful amen, he said: "Madam, I am a stranger in the city. I understand that you have apartments for decayed shabby gentility at reasonable figures; any little corner will do; if the house is crowded, you can hang me on a hook in the wardrobe."

"I will treat you better than that," the Madam laughingly exclaimed. "I hope, sir, we can please you. As you are a stranger, I shall exact payment in advance." Her thoughts were even then elated at the lucky stroke which saved her household effects from seizure.

"What are your terms, Madam?"

"Twenty dollars a month, room and board included."

"Reasonable enough, Ma'm. If you so desire I will be in the city three months, at least; here is sixty dollars to pay for the entire time. You see I am not afraid to trust you."

"Do not blame me, sir; the other day, an old, red-faced porpoise, who tipped the beam at two hundred pounds, walked off owing me just this amount. He plastered the side of my house with his flaming posters: 'Doctor Cheat-them, Pathologist, Diagnostician, and Specialist.' At first he paid me promptly, then he dropped little by little behind, then he would absent himself on pro-



fessional business, and then disappeared altogether."

"You had his trunk for security, did you not?"

"Such security as it was. I would try to raise it, but my strength was not sufficient; when I forced the lock I found it filled with bricks. You cannot blame me, sir; indeed you cannot."

"Were they gold bricks, Madam?"

This witty sally brought a flush of anger to her face. It passed away with the thought, as she inquired: "Have you your baggage with you? I will show you to your room."

"Madam, can you give me references? Business is business."

The names she furnished were quickly transferred to his note book. Harry's name was not of them. A great sigh of relief was breathed gently from his lips.

"She does not remember me," he meditated. "Poor human pride, how comfortable she could be in the village of F——— where she was born! The city, the city; a grave for a thousand wrecked hopes." He said this while she was having his room prepared. She did not inform him that she had taken a picture from this room, a mirror from that room, lace curtains from the back parlor.

"Now, sir, all is ready. I hope you will like



your room. Will you have dinner, or do you lunch down in the city?"

"I will always be punctual at my meals. Give me a night latch key; I will slip in and out; you will not know there is such a person in existence."

"Don't lose it. Sometimes I have to come down in my night dress, which I think is horrid." She gave the stranger a peculiar, coquettish look, that meant little or much.

"Harry is right," he thought. "I wonder why the boy spoke so positively, but we will see, we will see."

When the Madam was gone, he made preparations for a long stay by filling the wardrobe and emptying his trunk. His pictures were neatly framed. He was very careful to place every article in marked position. His album of photographs he placed in a conspicuous position. When dinner was announced, he entered the long apartment and glanced hastily down the table. He noticed that the boarders were all young men; he calmly endured the stares of impolite curiosity. Cash, cash, went down one side and up the other; a score of hands deftly ran through the alphabetical list of delinquents; one by one they interviewed the hostess; they were clerks placed in the house to save a lost ball, just the material the detective wished to make use of.

When the meal was ended, he lighted a cigar



and again visited the piers where the foreign ships were moored; he visited the cold cat-fish stands and took a hot Scotch just to make his blood circulate; from the landing he went to the Agency to receive his badge, or star, which was numbered 789. He pinned it on the inside of his left lapel, and boarded an uptown car for home. An amused smile played over his honest face as he noted the disarrangement of his effects. She is the same dangerous woman, she has a duplicate key to my wardrobe. It is fortunate for me that the lock on my trunk is a tumbler lock and a good strong one.

"My album has been overhauled; she has swallowed the bait, hook and all. I will await developments; perhaps I was a little premature; there is some one else I wish to reach, without losing any time."

He noticed an uneasy feeling of curiosity take possession of his landlady. The tension became too great and inquisitiveness overcome her politeness, as she asked:

"Were you ever in the town of F——, Mr. Thompson?"

"I never heard of such a place, Madam; why do you ask?"

"You have a picture of a very dear friend of mine in your album."

"I have a picture of a friend of yours in my



album?" He repeated this with much astonishment. "It cannot be possible; show me the portrait."

She turned the pages rapidly and placed the face of Madge on the detective's knees. She stood a little behind him and cast a sidewise glance at the emotionless countenance.

"That picture," he answered, with a puzzled look on his face, "that picture a sailor gave me in Burnam." He saw a deathly paleness come to her face and he pressed his advantage. "You see," he said, "that I have a weakness for beauty; the different styles of nationalities are admirably arranged; strange to relate, I could not tell you the name of one person represented in this collection."

"That is Madge, the very hat and dress she had on when she came to board with me. I am a relative of hers; she had a temper of her own, and was ungrateful and obstinate as a mule; she took that from her Scottish blood."

"Is it a Scottish trait to be obstinate?" he asked.

"Her father was a Scot, and her mother a Greek; a strange combination, is it not? He was an officer in Her Majesty's service. He fell in love and retired on half pay. He came to America and drifted to F——, where Madge was born."



While the Madam was relating this bit of family history her eyes were intently fixed upon the face of Mr. Thompson. The inspection was all that she could wish, for she continued: "She was raised by an uncle, who died, her aunt married again and had other children; for this reason Madge came to me."

"Is she with you now, Madam?"

"No, she preferred to make a living for herself. I did not like to see her go from my house, because girls have so many temptations to encounter. Her face and figure were too attractive; such a risk such girls run."

She sighed softly, as she said this, and waited for some expression to stir the sleepy face of her new boarder. He observed the silence and with an effort aroused himself from the reverie into which he had fallen.

"What became of the young girl?" he inquired.

"I really do not know."

"It is running some risk, Madam, for a young and unprotected young lady to brave the dangers of a place like this."

"Do you mean to insult me, sir? I will have you to understand that my house is a respectable house."

"I was only referring to the magnitude of the city; no reflections intended; as a relative, you



should have looked closer after her welfare. Do not be offended," he said; "you volunteered to tell me this girl's history; it seems strange that no one knows of her whereabouts."

"Some of my boarders remember her well."

"Did she ever come back to see you?"

"Never. I see this is worrying you; you will find your room is ready; good night."

When his bed room door was closed and locked he sat for two hours gazing into the glowing grate of coals. A dozen of theories came to him in the stillness of night. Of one thing he was sure; the Madam knew where Madge was. He could not press her too far without betraying his object. With consummate skill he planned to spread his net for the unwary clerks, whose little world was bounded by the price of sugar and tea. A box of fine cigars he would place upon his mantel, and thus gain the coveted information.

His cigars and hot whisky punches had a fetching effect. The little outlay repaid him well for his trouble. It is true that he was compelled to listen to the small talk that was permeated by the odor of beer gardens and variety actresses. He rubbed his hands vigorously, and said:

"Congratulate yourself, Thompson; you have a starter. She is standing behind a counter, day after day, with a yard stick in her hands. Too



bad, too bad. Working, perhaps, for little or nothing."

When the business of the commercial day was ended he waited at the entrance of Harry's firm. His young friend was talking to one of the partners. He prudently walked to the corner of the block and shadowed the accountant, who was walking slowly, with his eyes directed to the sidewalk.

The detective touched him lightly on the arm and whispered: "I will follow." When Harry reached his room, he placed a match to the fire that had been prepared and waited with some impatience the coming of Mr. Thompson, who was not far behind.

"Harry, pardon my delay; I purposely lingered. We must be cautious; one false step would ruin our plans."

"I have been uneasy, Mr. Thompson; your calling is a dangerous one. You have absented yourself since Monday two weeks back. Give an account of yourself, my friend."

"Congratulate me, my boy; I have had an unusual run of luck. I am on the trail—a starter at least. It is as I supposed; Madge came to the city because her uncle married; her step aunt was cruel to her."

"Why did not Madge let me know that she was in the city? It is all so strange."



"The Madam's devilment is at the bottom of it. I am sure she told the girl that you were not in the city."

"Have you located her, Mr. Thompson?"

"At the dry goods emporium of B——; she was there six months ago; I hope she is still at the same place."

"Six months is a long time," exclaimed Harry. "I dread to know the worst."

"Fudge, my boy, I am glad she passed from the Madam's control; anything would be preferable to that."

"How will you now proceed?"

"This is my reason for calling upon you. If she is employed by the firm, it will be easy enough to enact the part of a western merchant. I shall need a hundred dollars; I want it in one dollar bills."

"Why in one dollar bills?"

"Harry, you would never make a detective; all for show. A hundred dollar bill does not look to be so plethoretic as one hundred one dollar bills."

"I swear you are right; it is bulk not value these days."

"Here are five twenty dollar notes. You can have them changed at the saloons, Mr. Thompson; or, perhaps, it would be better to go to the



banks where such packages are all ready for circulation."

"Harry, have you fully made up your mind in regard to Madge?"

"I have, and here is my hand on it; even to the very last battlement. Can you ask any more of me?"

"Have you weighed the probabilities well? It means for you, perhaps, social ostracism, and loss of your position."

"For Madge's sake I will make any sacrifice."

"Spoken like a man, Harry. I am sure you will never regret the resolution you have made."

"I must return to the boarding house. The Madam is half suspicious that I am not what I represent myself to be. She is no ordinary woman; as deep as the ocean is she."

"Is that you, Mr. Thompson?" came from the bottom of the steps as he was ascending to his room.

"Yes, Ma'm, why do you ask? I am not going to jump my board."

A merry little laugh came from her lips as she closed the door of her bedroom.

The detective noticed that his album had been tampered with, that the picture of Madge had been removed and another of the same lot had been substituted.

"I see here a little break in the pasteboard.



The pictures were changed in a hurry. She has not been out of my room ten minutes. The faintest odor of perfume still permeates the atmosphere. There is no writing on the back of this one, but some information that is of more importance. I see here the artist's name and address, which fixes the date of her arrival in the city. The Madam has already informed me that the hat in this likeness is the hat she had on when she arrived."

"I will easily secure this date from the photographer, who keeps negatives and numbers them; the number on this is 29,384." He unlocked the wardrobe and took from the upper shelf a package of letters that he had purposely placed in a certain position. "Ha ! Ha!" he laughed, softly; "I have disarmed suspicion, for the time at least. My Australian letters served me a good turn."

At the breakfast table the Madam was more gracious than usual. A bad sign, a bad sign, Thompson repeated to himself. "I must hurry up this case for Madge's sake. We are playing a game of cross purposes. If she wins, I am ruined; if I win, the reckoning will be terrible for the Madam."

He did not heed the sly glances of self-elation as she assisted the detective to don his overcoat, and bade him good morning with a cheery smile.



For this reason he was more guarded than usual. His first appointment was with the tailor, who measured him for a suit of clothes of English cut. From there he went by a circuitous route to the photographer, where he gained the desired information, and lunched at a restaurant.

He ate leisurely. Between mouthfuls he ran his eyes down the column of steam-ship arrivals. A quick gleam of satisfaction lighted his face as he finished the lunch and hastened to the vessel for his mail. "Ah! ha!" he said, "the Madam outwitted me then. It is as I thought. I can do nothing until my new suit is ready. Now for news that will place my chances upon a more secure foundation."

One week later, he put on his English suit, adroitly adjusted the side whiskers, placed the roll of one dollar bills in his long leather pocket-book, and entered the dry goods emporium of ———. His heart beat a trifle faster as he moved from department to department in search of the missing girl.

"Do you wish to look at some dry goods, sir?" politely inquired the floor-walker.

"Yes, yes; it is my wish to lay in my spring supply. A face is absent; the father of the girl is my trusted friend; I promised him that I would fill my order that she may have the benefit of the discount."



"We do not allow any discounts in that way. We pay them regular wages. If they are unusually bright we advance them to more lucrative positions. What is the name of the young lady?" he kindly asked.

"I have her name in my book; it is Madge W——."

"I do not know the name of a single saleslady in the store. They lose their identity here and are numbered. We employ a small army of clerks; it is the only way we can systematize our business."

"Can you tell me if she is still in your employ?"

"Wait here one moment. Some of the other girls may know her, or, better still, remember her number."

A tall blond came towards them that had been in the same department with Madge. She was introduced to Mr. Thompson. A shade of disappointment crept over the detective's face. She was painted and rouged. The flippant air distressed him. When the floor-walker was elsewhere, he said in a low tone: "Can you tell me where Madge W—— is?"

"She is a dear friend of mine; are you her father? How much she needed some relative to give her advice."



"You have not answered my inquiry," he added, kindly.

"Come, to-morrow; I am not able to tell you now because she has been away from the firm for eight months, at least."

"I will pay you well for the information. At what hour shall I call?"

"After five o'clock; then I will be at leisure."

"What was her number, you did not give me the number." When he had booked the number he politely bowed himself out and returned to his boarding house. Come and go as he would, the Madam was ready to meet him, or say a pleasant good day.

"Well, sir! Have you had luncheon? I have kept your dinner warm; you must be more punctual in future. I have made an exception to my rule, this time. You will find the soup a trifle cold, the steak a trifle overdone."

"I beg of you, Madam, that you will not inconvenience yourself in the least on my account."

"I have taken a decided fancy for your cute ways; besides, you are my star boarder." As she said this she gave him a significant look, one that concealed boundless curiosity, masked by a smile. "I have told you everything; you have told me nothing; how do I know. You may be a detective for all that I can tell."

"Have I not paid my board bill three months



in advance? I am just what I represent myself to be, nothing more and nothing less."

"That picture in your possession makes me suspicious. Describe the seaman's appearance," she said. Her intense stare made the detective feel uncomfortable. He adroitly turned the channel of conversation, by asking:

"Are you a criminal from justice that you, or, rather your reputation, needs must bear an investigation?"

"What a strange answer to my question," she exclaimed, with evident embarrassment. The self-possessed bearing was swept away with one stroke. She was on the defensive side of the position. With a merry little laugh, she continued: "Never mind, sir; I will pay you for your rudeness. I will order you to take me to the theatre, at least twice a week. I saw your large roll of money."

"Do you make the same demands upon all of your boarders?" he asked.

"Those that I especially like. You have seen my class of boarders. Do you think their purses could stand such depletion?"

"I would be very happy to give you an oyster luncheon once in a great while; I am tired of theaters."

"Why do you use the term oyster luncheon?"

"Some of your boarders say that you have a



friend who prepares delectable stews. I am especially fond of oysters."

"A friend of mine," she deliberately repeated. "A common woman like that a friend of mine! Who told you this?"

"I beg pardon, Madam; if you will only give me her address I will be glad to sample her stews."

An uneasy feeling betrayed the concealed thoughts, a flush of anger flashed from her dark eyes, she tucked the comb more deeply into her hair, and thus hid the momentary confusion while she wearily exclaimed: "This business is killing me; something to eat, something to drink, something to wear—when will it end?"



## CHAPTER III.

### MEETS THE SALESLADY.

When the Madam quitted the room he glanced sharply at his watch. "Twenty minutes to five; I will just have time to meet the young lady."

A throb of compassion made an extra heart beat, as he noted the tired droop of the eyes and the expressionless movement of her body. This shop girl with her dispirited air was the intimate friend of Madge, and Madge for the poor pittance of four dollars a week stood behind these long rows of counters all day long, hungry and tired, had roomed with three other girls in the same room, paying her proportion of the light house-keeping expenses, just enough salary to keep soul and body together.

A touch on his arm recalled his morose thoughts. "You are dreaming, sir."

"Yes, my good girl, I was dreaming. We will go to the nearest restaurant and get something to eat; do not spare any expense. While you are eating you will tell me of your companion.



Her father is deeply grieved, her absence is unaccountable."

"Madge had a pretty face and attracted a stranger at once. Such faces are sometimes a misfortune."

"Why did she lose her place?"

"She had a promise of higher wages elsewhere."

A relieved expression of mental gratitude made him exclaim: "I am glad to hear you say so, my good girl."

The question he wished to ask somehow stuck in his throat. Another time will do. "What places of amusement did she frequent?"

"None in particular. She had much attention from the boarders of Madam V———'s house. I should think they could furnish you some information about my room-mate. She promised to come to see me often. Not a line or word from her since she left the store."

"Then this is all of the news that you can give me?" he pleadingly asked. "The boarding-house will, no doubt, furnish further information. What is the number? I will book it and investigate."

"I hate the Madam," the girl impetuously exclaimed; "I really hate her, she was so mean to Madge."

"How?" the detective cautiously asked. "I



do not see how any one could be harsh with my friend's daughter; her disposition used to be all sunshine before she left home for the city."

"It will ruin any one's disposition, this exacting grind of life. Madge had the Madam to contend with. You cannot know what this means. She tried to sell her niece's virtue for a round sum. Madge told me this with her own lips."

"Great God! she did not succeed, I hope."

"No, Madge was firm in her determination. They quarrelled; since then my friend seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth."

"Where was she last seen?" Mr. Thompson excitedly exclaimed.

"At Madam ——'s restaurant. She was with a friend named Harry. I never saw the gentleman before; he was handsome, tall and dark."

"Answers Harry's description exactly," the detective mentally thought. "It cannot be; it cannot be. I recall his confusion when he handed me the Madam's card."

"What are you saying?" the girl innocently asked.

"Nothing, nothing," he replied. "How her old father will be distressed? It is all so strange, I cannot understand it."

When they had ended the meal, Mr. Thomp-



son kindly asked: "Would you like to go to the theatre, to-night?"

"Not to-night, thank you, I am so tired and worn out; to-morrow will be Saturday. We will go to the theatre then. When that is out, we will go where your friend's child was last seen."

"Very good, very good; here is a ten dollar bill; it will buy some comforts. I do this for your friend's sake, and now good-night."

"You are very kind to me, sir." Tears were in her eyes as she turned away and boarded a car.

Mr. Thompson's face was apparently statuesque in its repose. The words of the poor shop girl were continually repeating themselves in the order of their utterance. He was in no mood to parley with the Madam. Fortunately she was absent from home. With a relieved sigh, he settled himself in the cushioned rocker, and drew from his pocketbook the slip of paper with Madge's number on it, then he locked the door and drew from his portfolio the odds and ends he gathered at the deserted house.

He had filed them methodically. It was the work of a moment to extract from the bundle three bill heads of the before mentioned dry goods house. Madge's number was on them, and beneath: "Charged to account of No. 496." "Perhaps she paid her board in this manner," he said. "Ah! ha! my Lady Artful; who is your friend



that paid these bills that are receipted, discount credited to 496? Let me go over the names of the references she gave me when I paid my board in full."

"Here is the name, sure enough. Thank God for this discovery! I was wrong in my too hasty opinion of Harry. I hope that further evidence will bring a full vindication."

He looked carefully through to the end. Nothing rewarded his patience. "Here a discount is allowed on this invoice. The polite floor-walker told me that no discounts were allowed. This gentleman that paid the Madam's indebtedness must have been a privileged personage."

He hastily shoved the pile of evidence into his trunk, because the Madam's high-keyed voice came up from the first floor, with an inquiry for him. He carefully replaced every article in the room, and met her as she was half way up the stairway.

"I felt uneasy about you, Mr. Thompson; you are such a stranger in the house; I hope you have been entirely well?"

He knew why she said this. The hidden sarcasm was not lost on him. Her purpose was to break through his reserve. His face hardened a little; a look of annoyance was the only token of



displeasure that indicated to the Madam any change of feeling.

"Why are you so reserved, Mr. Thompson? I do not understand your disposition. Has the world treated you badly? One would think so because you are always so serious."

There was a world of hidden meaning in the way the question was put. He knew that she was on her guard. Some one was giving her information; he was sure of this. The name of the attorney, the letter that came on the English steamer in the same mail with his own, the look of exultation, confirmed this belief. He resorted to his old tactics; he answered her question by asking another.

"Madam," he said, "why are you so solicitous of my welfare? I am fully able to take care of myself, and especially of my affairs. I do not complain because you measure to me my fare with an exactness that is distressing, neither do I inquire how much your household expenses are. One would imagine that I was a detective, trying to unravel your life's history. Have you done some terrible wrong in the past that must needs bear an investigation?"

Her fawning manner was in sharp contrast with her previous bearing, as she replied: "I am sorry if I have offended you, Mr. Thompson. You are really so mysterious in your movements,



I never know when to expect you; you always come home by a different car line."

"I suppose this is the reason that your room is on the first floor, that you may stand guard over your boarders as they come and go."

"You bad man, what makes you so observing?"

"It is a habit of mine," he laughingly answered; "I am not dangerous."

The detective quitted the house and walked in a contrary direction from the one he expected to take. He was sure that he was shadowed. When he had turned seven corners, he stood behind the angle the corner provided and waited for the shadower to appear. With quiet self-possession he faced to the right; a collision was the result. "You cannot apologize, you scoundrel; you have been following me. Pick up your hat from the gutter; the Madam will need you to wait upon the table."

The humiliated man scrambled to his feet, wiped the dust from his clothes, and quickly retraced his steps. When he was no longer in sight, Mr. Thompson expeditiously hailed a car, and again entered the mammoth dry goods house of ———. The same attentive gentleman quietly awaited the detective's pleasure.

"You are very kind and polite, sir; I am sure the gentlemen that controls this immense busi-



ness will prosper when they have such polite floor-walkers."

"Don't mention it, politeness costs nothing. It is the cheapest capital that one can invest in. It always pays handsome returns. Can I show you our line of fresh spring goods?"

"I am looking over the market, leisurely, of course. Plenty of time. I am disappointed. My friend stated that his daughter was employed in this store. I came prepared to purchase extensively, that the young lady might have the benefit of the sale. I think you told me that no discounts were credited to the salesladies."

"Yes, sir, it is an invariable rule of the house. The profit on goods is so small that no exception can be made."

"I will be in the city two weeks, and will be pleased to call again. By the way, would you kindly tell me why the young lady was discharged? Her father will be sure to ask me. Any information you can give will be thankfully accepted."

"With pleasure; follow me to the office."

"I have her salesnumber. For this reason it will not take much of your time. The tall girl with the blond hair was so obliging that I will give her any benefit such a purchase would bring to her."

There was a nervous twitching of the detective's eyes as they traced the numerically ar-



ranged numbers down to No. 496. With lightning rapidity he glanced along the horizontal line. There was a blank opposite the name. "Strange, is it not," Mr. Thompson asked, "that no reason is assigned for her dismissal?"

"Wait here one moment," the polite usher exclaimed. "I will look into the matter. Something is radically wrong."

When he returned, the crest-fallen look on his face did not escape the sharp eyes of the would-be purchaser. Evidently he received a sharp reprimand from his principals. "I should not have shown this register," he meekly said, as he closed the book with a determined slam. "Good day, sir."

Mr. Thompson entered the private office where two of the officers were busily occupied, and exclaimed in a firm tone of voice: "I am the gentleman that was tracing the course of a great injustice. I claim the right for my friend's sake. You have dismissed an employe for no reason whatever. The register shows a clean space opposite to her name. As I said before, I claim the right to know why you discharged her from your service?"

The partner that was seated nearest to the detective turned with an ill-mannered scowl on his face, and in a surly tone replied: "It is none of—of—," the words stuck in his throat. The calm,



cold look on the detective's face did not permit the head of the firm to finish the sentence. With more gentleness the busy man continued:

"It is a difficult matter, Mr. Thompson, to keep track of so many salesladies; they come and go. The young lady you are inquiring about did not stay very long with us. There was an aunt of hers that circulated ugly reports about her."

"For this reason you discharged her. Sir, then why did you not fill out the blank space opposite her name?"

"That is my business; good day, good day." He turned to his correspondence and did not notice the silent inquirer as he moved through tons of goods to find the usher. The same suave greeting impelled the detective to remark:

"This is one time your capital stock of politeness did not bring you any return. I trust that your kindness has not been the cause of any serious trouble."

"I received the same gratuitous advice that you received." The floor-walker said this with an amused smile, and added in a low tone of voice: "I never liked Mr. ——— very much. There is some restlessness in his makeup that I do not admire."

"Quite right, quite right. I received no satisfaction whatever. What is his given name?"

"Here is a card." With a pleasant smile the



gentlemanly attendant turned to a lady customer. Mr. Thompson looked around for the tall blond as he passed out. She was showing a lady some dress goods. That lady was the Madam V——. Their backs were towards him. "What a lucky escape," he chuckled; "bless my stars, I would never hear the last of it, no, never."

He hurried to his room and added another link to the lengthening chain of evidence. A disappointed expression revealed the fact that the name on the card was not one of the references his landlady gave to him.

"So much the better, Mr. ——; you are very well acquainted with all of the facts in the case, as the lawyers say. I wonder if the tall blond knows the arch-plotter of all of Madge's misery. I will see her, to-night."

He did not wait for his supper but hurried to Harry's rooms and donned a more suitable suit of black cloth, ate leisurely at a down town restaurant, glanced at his watch, and hastened to keep his appointment.

"No cabs, or hacks, for Thompson," he grunted. "They have numbers on the lamps—tell-tale evidence that is sometimes very inconvenient to explain away." A genuine pang of regret smote him sharply as he made his best bow to the poor shop girl who was bedecked in all of her finery, so different from his own ideas of modest refine-



ment. There was no mistaking the genuine look of anticipated pleasure on her face. This repaid him for the regret that was momentary. This girl could tell of Madge, her life struggle, of all her little heart disappointments, and of her mysterious disappearance.

"Are you not going to get a coupe?" she asked. "I shall feel that you are miserly. We will go to the ——— Theater. A cab, if you cannot afford a coupe, will be the proper rig."

"Do you know any genteel driver of a carriage?" he kindly asked. "I am a little peculiar in my disposition." He waited with suppressed eagerness for her answer.

"Yes, I know a very polite hackman, but I do not vouchsafe for his honesty. They say he is crooked. I do not believe it, he has been so kind to me."

"It is right to stand by your friends," he said. "Sometimes friends are our worst enemies; personal motives often make friendship a delusion."

"I do not understand your fine language," she replied. "Tim has been my friend when I needed a friend."

"Tim is his name, then. Where can you find him? You shall ride in his hack if it is your wish."

"The distance is too much; we have no time to lose as the curtain rises at eight."



"What is the number of his vehicle? I can make my engagements with him in advance."

"His number is 762. It would be kind of you, sir."

When Mr. Thompson entered the theater with the saleslady on his arm, he cast a rapid glance over the audience to assure himself that the Madam was not present. She was seated six rows in front of him, and on the same side of the dress circle. The side exit was just behind them. "How fortunate for me that it is so convenient. I wonder if my companion has noted her presence."

"Who is that elegantly dressed lady six rows in front over to the right? She has ostrich tips in her hat, and a red opera cloak well thrown back to display the quilted white satin lining."

"I do not know who she is," the girl replied. "I see her often in the store. She has a line of credit because what she buys is guaranteed by Mr. M., the gentleman that is with her."

"He must be wealthy. I cannot see his full face, he is removing his overcoat; what a frank, manly way he has of looking at you."

The shop girl looked steadily from one to the other and exclaimed: "He must be your twin brother. I never saw such a close resemblance in all my life."

Fortunately the play was advanced to a climax.



For this reason, the remark was unnoticed, even by those seated nearest to them.

Mr. Thompson paid scant attention to the acts or actors. A play was on the boards far more thrilling, because it was real. With his usual caution he noted the information that might be of use to him later. A feeling of relief banished the gloomy thoughts. His protege was not acquainted with his landlady. Her visit to the store was meaningless. So far, the sailing was smooth enough.

The curtain had not unrolled to the floor, when the detective and his friend reached the sidewalk, and stood in the shade of the electric light. While the tall blond arranged her wraps, he watched Madam V. pass down the crowded aisle.

"If you are good I will introduce you to our set. We are a close corporation, sir, I will have you understand, but you will have to pay for the privilege." Before the astonished escort could protest, she hailed a coupe, and directed the whip to No. —, Blank street.

The chagrined man pulled his hat-brim down over his eyes, and discreetly climbed out of the vehicle on the off side, placed the two silver dollars in the jehu's palm and entered the restaurant. The merriment was at its height, consequently they passed unnoticed to the rear of the room where convenient little stalls were curtained.



This arrangement afforded him every opportunity to see without being seen.

"Make your selection, my good girl. I know that such windfalls do not often come your way. Remember, to-morrow will be Sunday. You will have all day to sleep and rest. Oysters and white wine first? So let it be. Waiter, fill the order with dispatch."

While they were feasting and drinking, the detective studied deeply the pleasure-seeking throng, bent on making a night of it. A little fear crept into his heart as the continuous babble drifted towards them. A remark from his companion cut short his meditation.

"None of that, none of that. Come, sir, am I so uninteresting that you should be admiring other girls?"

They leaned forward until their faces almost touched. The girl's forehead was flushed with the wine she drank. In a confidential tone he said: "You promised to tell me all about Madge, and especially what she said to you of her unhappy life."

"You are sitting in the chair that she used when she was here the last time I saw her."

"Who was her escort?"

"A tall, dark, handsome man; he was swell, to be sure; diamonds galore, and best of all, money galore."



"Was his name Harry?" the detective eagerly inquired.

"No; at least this man's face is not so handsome as the picture of the friend that Madge was trying so hard to find when she first arrived in New York."

"Are you sick?" the girl exclaimed in alarm. Your brow is dripping with moisture. You seem to take a great interest in this friend of mine, considering that she is no relation of yours."

"If you could see the suffering of her parents, I am sure you would aid me to carry home some tidings of this missing daughter."

"I will, I will," she impulsively replied. "To continue, Madge hoped to find Harry, as she called him. She was a green country maiden, with pretty, red cheeks and coal black eyes, dangerous possessions in a big city like this. She complained to me of the Madam's fast ways, and even hinted that her aunt tried to sell her virtue."

"Who to? To what person?" Mr. Thompson quickly asked.

"She never told me who the person was. Anyhow they quarrelled. Madge came to the store. Her face was a drawing card; that brought money to the firm. Her employment was not so tiresome as mine was, because she sold perfumery and soaps. I do not know why we should have been such friends. I gave her the benefit of five



years' experience, and invited her to share our room and light housekeeping expenses."

"How much salary did the firm pay her, my good girl?"

"Four dollars a week. For this pitiful amount, Madge was expected to be at her counter by seven, stand on her feet all day, and go home in the night."

"What a miserable existence," he exclaimed, as he brought his clenched fist down on the table, and made the dishes rattle. "I do not wonder that these poor girls go wrong."

"You do not understand the self-reliant disposition of this class. Contact with men makes them excellent judges of human nature. Of course, the temptation, when mingled with pride, sometimes lures them to an easier life, but not often is such the case."

"I am following closely your history of Madge; continue, please."

"She was with the firm six or eight months. I saw her for the last time at this table." Then, in a low whisper, she said: "Here comes the Madam who owns the place. She is a bad one; between us, I believe she knows where my roommate is."

"Are you waited upon? I always go the rounds that none of my customers may complain."



The detective purposely displayed his big roll of bank bills and asked for his slip.

"You will find it at the cashier's desk. Before you leave have a glass of wine with me."

"With much pleasure. I have enjoyed your toothsome cooking very much, and shall be pleased to call again." When the proprietress withdrew, the detective queried: "Have you been to this place often? Why did you say that the Madam knew of your friend's whereabouts?"

"Because several of my chums have disappeared, and, like Madge, were seen here for the last time."

The pulsing arteries of ——— were thronged with restless humanity, mammon and money crowding weaker life to the wall. The glare of electric lights faded into the sober tints of morning, when the detective reached his room. The carpeted stairway befriended him, the doors never creaked a sound, and unobserved he sought his bed well pleased with the night's work.

"To think of it," he repeated slowly to himself. "I am sure that I am on the right track. Harry must help me, and yet I dislike to drag the poor boy into trouble. He must cultivate this restaurant woman. We will lunch there, tomorrow. How her coal black eyes glistened when she saw my roll of greenbacks. I heard her tell the shop girl, 'Not to lose sight of me.'"



He had some good reason for introducing Harry to this enemy of virtue. It was the touchstone of guilt or innocence. The tall, dark young man was a frequenter of the saloon. The thought that it might be Harry overcame him. With nervous haste he entered the counting room that at the hour of twelve was vacant. He made known his wishes to his boy. He did not tell him of the ruse, or the nature of the motive by which he was to be judged.

The place was new to the accountant. The distance from his place of business was fully three miles. "Mr. Thompson, I should not have accepted your invitation because I am very busy, to-day."

"Harry, you will thank me for the invitation when you know that in this place Madge was seen for the last time. Here our real work begins; no halting now. I have done my part. Upon you falls the responsibility of the situation. Do you love poor Madge enough to run the chances of the world's condemnation?"

"You have my word, Mr. Thompson."

"Thank you a thousand times for your manly frankness. You will cultivate that soulless woman over there. Money is her god, and while we eat I will tell you what I have accomplished."

When the detective ended the narration of



facts, Harry exclaimed: "What a wonderful man you are."

"Not so wonderful as you imagine. A little common sense goes a long ways in this detective business."

When they finished the well-prepared lunch, they touched glasses at the bar. The Madam's face expressed wonder when her eyes rested fully on the bookkeeper's face. "Are you and Frank D—— related? I never saw such a resemblance in my life."

"Perhaps I am fortunate, especially so if he is handsome," Harry courteously replied.

"My friend here would be delighted to make his acquaintance if you will give us his address."

She looked keenly at the detective and replied: "I never introduce anyone here; we are all so free and easy that a knockdown is entirely unnecessary."

With a pressing invitation to call again, the friends separated, Harry to his desk and Thompson to his boarding house. Madam V—— met him most graciously. A feeling of uneasiness was plainly discernible. The light bantering manner was exchanged for a purring coquetry that he despised. The Cinderella of the princes' ball was shorn of her finery. Comparisons were odious; neither knew how to break the ice of restraint.



"Sir, you are a very mysterious personage," she hesitatingly exclaimed. "I never know when to expect you, and never know where to find you."

"Is it an American custom to put tracers after your irregular boarders? One of your dining-room boys dogged my footsteps for a dozen of blocks. I will not stand any such nonsense."

"Did he?" She said this with a thinly-veiled vein of sarcasm. "You are a very important personage just now. I have my suspicions; it is true that I may be mistaken; for this reason I wish to make assurance doubly sure. You are not what you represent yourself to be."

"May I ask an explanation? You surprise me, Madam. What can my private life be to you? Do not save my meals for me. To be plain with you, please to attend to your business, and I will attend to mine."

"You have never fully satisfied me with the explanation you gave me in regard to my niece's picture."

"Why should I be compelled to satisfy an idle curiosity? Have you wronged this young girl in any way?"

"If you are a detective you pumped me dry with your smooth tongue and innocent ways. I should have told you nothing. Madge made her own couch to lie upon; if she has gone to the bad she has no one but herself to blame."



"I met a friend of yours that tells a different story," the detective replied. "She said you tried to sell your niece's virtue for a good round sum."

"I know who told you this; the Madam that keeps the restaurant down on ——— street. She is right. I hope Madge has fallen so low that a dog would not notice her. You are not a cute detective; you cannot swear by your beard, like a Mohammedan. I have noticed so often that it is not properly adjusted. Do you wonder that I know that you are not what you represent yourself to be?"

She stepped quickly up to him and threw back the lapel of his coat. "Now deny that you are not a detective? There is your star and number. You went to the ocean steamer for your letter. Fool! did you think that your letter was the only one from England?"

"You will get nothing for your trouble, because Madge will never come into her estate until her father's death is proven to the satisfaction of an English court. Go and work up some other case; you are wasting your time."

"Madam, I am paid with English money to work up this case, and I will do my duty under any and all circumstances. I know that money and influence are against me. I will use greater exertion because the law is on my side of the transaction."



"You did not find Madge, and you never will, mark my words. She is miles and miles away from here. I can afford to be magnanimous; we will be friends because I need your money in my business."

"Let it be so; I am glad we understand each other. I am a poor man; if I succeed, I will be a rich man. A fair field and no favors; the contest is on, we will shake hands to seal the understanding."

Mr. Thompson went slowly up the stairs to his room. He securely locked the door and seated himself by the fire. The ruddy blaze had a thousand thoughts concealed in its bed of coals. How fortunate it is that she did not recognize me. If she had pulled my false beard from my face she would have seen the birth scar. I must procure some innocent dye stuff and redouble my precaution. I wonder what headway Harry is making. It is now fully a month since he has been a habituate of the restaurant. Somehow I never meet him on the street, or in the room where he sleeps. I will hunt him up, this evening, and tell him what has happened at our boarding house.

Mr. Thompson noiselessly made his way to the front door and was soon lost in the crowded thoroughfare. He did not take a car, but footed it all the way to Harry's rooms. He let himself in with his night latch key, and waited for the



accountant's appearance. He did not wait long. The familiar footfall reached the landing at the head of the stairway. The detective stood behind the heavy portiere and watched his boy as he stood in front of the looking-glass, and shaved his face with neat dispatch and adjusted the lavender necktie with unusual care.

The shadow of his white face startled him. He turned up the gas jet fuller, and lighted the one on the other side of the mirror. The same sorrowful expression haunted him as he soliloquized: "The fate of Madge becomes a haunting specter to peer at me from every corner of my troubled thoughts. How often this vision of loveliness wanders back to me from the Village of F. Sweet little Madge, whose tawny curls were kissed by the free winds of heaven, whose rose-bud lips sang such merry songs, whose rich red cheeks were velvety and soft; how often she gathered apronsful of wild flowers, and pelted me with fragrant showers."

"Ah! Madge, Madge, your little feet were destined to tread the wine press of sorrow alone. If it is not too late I will save you though I lose all and place my reputation in the balances to make the sacrifice more perfect."

"Amen, I say to that noble sentiment."

"You here, Mr. Thompson. I did not hear you come up the steps."



"I have been in the room for half an hour. I saw the truthful piece of acting."

"You see that I am in earnest."

"Harry, here is the paper you signed. You are free. Two wrongs do not make one right. If Madge has gone to the bad, it is no reason that you should go there also. Your employers were at the agency, yesterday; you know what it means. I am employed to shadow you. I want to say now, if any trouble should come to you, here is the address of the best detective on the force. He is a staunch friend of mine; you can trust him with your life."

"Do you expect any trouble or danger, Mr. Thompson?"

"Can't tell, can't tell; a detective's movements are more uncertain than the weather predictions, not to speak of the danger. The landlady knows that I am a detective; last night my life was worth just one rush-light. If I should be so unfortunate as to lose my life, you will find all of my papers in a small tin box in the chief's big safe."

"Keep the paper, I will fulfill my obligations to the letter, the consequences will be my reward. I do not care a fig for the judgment of the world, so long as everything is all right here."

"Nobly spoken, Harry. Unfortunately you are living on earth, and not where the all-seeing



eye of Divine Justice sifts the real from the unreal. You are going to an entertainment at your employer's. I have heard that Blanche, the daughter of the senior partner, is deeply in love with you. Such a chance for a partnership does not often come one's way; think well before you act."

"A partnership in what? A firm that is doing business on borrowed capital. If their debts were paid, they would not have enough to buy a ginger cake. The world is a confiding creature. Show and display count for something where confidences are to be nursed."

"Harry, have you committed yourself in any way to the merchant's daughter? If you have, I will most assuredly release you from any obligation so far as I am concerned. If you have won her love, stand by the troth you plighted, though it should break Madge's heart."

"Nothing serious, Mr. Thompson. With the old love in my heart, how could I forget my little playmate? Her misfortune makes her doubly dear to me. If I could have known that she was in the city, I would have married her at once, and thus ended the trouble."

"Harry, do not go, to-night, unless you are prepared to be snubbed. I have heard that you will not be welcome."



"I cannot accept your advice, for two reasons: I will know how many friends I have; secondly, I will be able to discontinue my visits and give Blanche a chance to overcome any affection she may have for me."

"After to-night, Harry, you will understand what I mean. If you are brave, the reward will be worth the sacrifice. You are late, good bye, God bless you. Do not forget the tin box, or my friend at the agency."

The accountant entered the massive doors, whose French plate glass shone with jeweled brilliancy. The elegant parlors were filled with models of fashionable dressing. The hum of small talk drifted to the door in one confused wave. He pressed through the crowded rooms to pay his respects to the host and hostess. The strained greeting chilled the impulsiveness that always made him a welcome visitor everywhere. A morbid feeling made Harry painfully diffident. His old friends were cool as the songs of charity.

"Thompson was right; this is no place for me. I will withdraw to this little nook where the portiere will conceal me from view. They say that eavesdroppers never hear any good of themselves."

"I think Harry had a fair amount of cheek to come here, to-night," said one of the waltzers,



as the couple swept by him, leaving a fragrant cloud of perfume behind.

"I should have made myself conspicuous by my absence," whispered another couple that sat near to him.

"A good fellow gone to the dogs," asserted a third. "What a chance he had for preferment, to say nothing of Miss Blanche; junior partner, for instance, in one of the staunchest business houses in the city. What fools men can be."

"Wine and women," drawled a fourth, with a silly leer.

"Hello, Ed; when did you take to moralizing. Let me tell you scandal-mongers something," exclaimed Claud, in a voice that could be heard all over the rooms: "You have done more wickedness in one hour than Harry has done in all of his life, and I know it. There is some mystery about it that we do not understand; he would not have thrown himself away in so short a time; I will stake my existence on his integrity."

"Do you mean to insult us?" fiercely muttered several defamers.

"I mean exactly what I say. I look around me at the bald-headed dudes, who are eagerly pulling down my friend's reputation, when all of the angels from heaven have not strength enough to pull their own reputations up. The world is



a sham and I know it." The brave speaker whirled from the little knot, with Blanche for a partner.

Harry made his way through a maze of silks, satins and diamonds, to the cloak room, where he drew on his overcoat, slowly descended the flight of marble steps to the iron gate."

"Blanche, you here, out in this dreadful weather; go in at once, you will be a fit subject for the undertaker."

"Not until you tell me what is the trouble, Harry. I believe you are losing your mind."

"I hope no peaceably disposed person will find it. For this reason, I wish to set you free from any claims I may have upon your friendship. I have not at any time claimed more than a friendly regard, so the parting will be without any regrets on either side."

"Do you think my love can be thrown aside like an old glove? You will always be the same to me, Harry."

"I am too generous to ask of you such a sacrifice after the torture of this evening."

"What strange part is this you are playing, Harry? Some good spirit whispers to me that you are innocent. Stand out from the dark shadow that hides your true self, and I swear I will go down to infamy with a smile on my lips."



"Good night. God bless you Blanche."

He fled like a madman. From the harrowing interview, he turned to see the white, pained face staring at him from the darkness. His inward thoughts were poor guides for the aimless footsteps that drifted like the current of destiny, from one street to another. He did not see the inanimate form that was lying full length across the sidewalk. In his haste to retire from the gateway, he stumbled over the prostrated body of a drunkard, whose sorrows at that time were the least part of his life.

He drew from his hand the soiled glove and threw it away, and seated himself on a rustic iron seat that belonged to the tenantless house, whose shadows hid him from the passers by. "Poor wretch," he mournfully exclaimed; "how oblivious to pride, to honor, to shame; he is happier than I am, because he can forget. I cannot, I dare not forget, because Blanche's tear-stained face hurts my heart. Better to part now, than later."



## CHAPTER IV.

### HARRY LOCATES MADGE.

While he sat thus meditating, a stylish carriage drove slowly by him. From the deep shadows he could see the face of a beautiful woman plainly visible in the glare of the electric light. She leaned forward from the cushioned seat and turned her full face towards him. All the bravest impulses of his nature were struggling for mastery. The helpless position of Madge, the self-sacrificing nobleness of Blanche, made an equipoise of his resolutions. Time was bearing his first love swiftly away from him. The white face behind the carriage window, and the cab that followed, decided the question for him. With a fierce gasp he whispered: "Keep that turnout in sight and this twenty-dollar banknote is yours. Do not press forward indiscreetly, but never on your life let the vehicle get away from you."

"Aye! aye! sir; jump in." The door closed with a click, and Harry sank into the soft cushions



with a relieved sigh as he soliloquized: "I am glad for Thompson's sake that I have located Madge; it will advance his cause thus much. I am sure he was on the right trail, but who the devil is this unknown man that resembles me so much? I wonder if he has deceived my little playmate with this striking resemblance?"

These surmises were abruptly terminated by the sudden jolt of the cab as it brought up sharply just around the corner of a building. He stepped quickly to the pavement and peeped around the corner just in time to see the elegant barouche glide smoothly through a wide gateway, up to the door of a palatial residence that was shrouded in gloom. A light from one of the windows on the other side of the building was the only evidence that the place was occupied.

"Shall I wait for you, sir?" the driver politely asked. "Faith and I had a race for it, sir; my horses are blowing like porpoises; a bit of a rest would do them no harm."

"You can walk them slowly back to the city; it would be better than standing here. Here is your pay, my good man; a good night's work it has been for you. I will follow you until you are out of range."

As the cab moved off in the direction of town, Harry noted the number on the lamp, 473. He



mentally ejaculated, I will book it for future reference. Thompson taught me this detective trick. God only knows what I am doing in this out-of-the-way part of ———. I do not know what the future has in store for me. It looks ugly for Madge; she is either a governess or a mistress. God grant that it is the former."

"I say again, amen."

"You here, Mr. Thompson? What a load you have lifted from my heart. How did you find this place? I have been priding myself on this neat piece of detective work, only to learn that you have forestalled me."

"I noticed you when you alighted from the hack. I saw you make a memorandum of the cab number, but you failed to note the cabman's appearance. Do you think you would know him again if you should meet him? It is very important that you should keep his ugly phiz in your mind."

"I thought the number of his cab would identify the man."

"You would not make a first-class detective, my boy; the whip that drove you so furiously has already changed the number on his lamps three times, to-night."

"As the memorandum is worthless, I will make small fragments of my first detective work."



"Not with my consent. Never throw away the smallest bit of evidence. Things that seem worthless to others are little beginnings for great results. I have been shadowing that man for three months. His name is Tim; a slicker rascal never went unchanged. He is useful to me now; for this reason I do not pull him."

"What an enigma you are, Mr. Thompson. How can this man do us harm?"

"When you hailed his cab he was then following the barouche. He would have been glad to haul you for nothing. Your twenty dollar bill was an extra windfall. You will be surprised to learn that he is Madam V——'s trusted accomplice. He will drive to the Madam's before he stables his tired animals and inform her that you have found Madge."

"How did you locate this hackman?"

"Through the poor shop girl, who is innocent now, but if she allows that scoundrel to have control of her actions, she will soon go to the bad."

"We must save Madge, to-night, Mr. Thompson; there is no time to lose. I hate that female devil with all of my heart."

"You are in no fix to save anything. Here you are out this inclement night in that claw-hammer coat and low-cut vest. Go home at once; you have to work, to-morrow."



"I will take your advice and thank you for it, too. I am chilled to the bones. I shall never be able to find my way back to town."

"Easy enough, my lad. Here, take a strong pull at this little brown flask; it will make your blood circulate real old Scottish whiskey. Now be off with you. I will be vigilant and report to you. I am particularly anxious that your employer should find you in the office at the usual hour. I have my reasons for this, which I will explain to you later. I will be on guard all night; nothing shall escape me. The friend I told you of will relieve me by morning. Follow this avenue for six blocks, then turn down to the right; you will find a car at the terminus. Stay, Harry; be here, to-morrow night; you must be the hero to save her. You will relieve me as I am widening my knowledge of this affair in another direction."

When Harry was out of sight the detective made his way cautiously across the smoothly-shaven lawn. He did this because the gravel walk was a danger to be avoided. The long, slanting beam of light that was sifted through lace curtains revealed the interior of the magnificently appointed room. The cheerful blaze from the coal grate made the pale watcher shiver as he buttoned his great coat from his throat to his knees, and crept



nearer to the broad veranda, where he had a distinct view of the interior.

A moment later Madge entered the apartment. Her manner was nervous in the extreme. She clenched her small hands as if some imaginary enemy stood before her. She glided quickly from one side of the chamber to the other, threw her person upon an easy chair, and sobbed aloud.

The detective stood in the shadow like some dumb statue. A dozen of times he resolved to make his presence known by a slight tap on the window-pane. "Not yet, not yet," he repeated, disconsolately; "the play is not out. I would undo all that I have done." He withdrew farther into the shadow. The light was extinguished, the flickering shadows of the firelight glimmered on the wall. No person entered the bed room and all was well.

When day was coldly breaking, Mr. Thompson took a strong pull at his flask and noted the position of the outhouses, the gateways, the entrances to the house, for the movements of Madge were of the utmost importance to him. Mr. MacKenzie, his friend at the agency, came to him and silently took up the thread of the investigation. With all of the skill of an experienced civil engineer, he drew from his side pocket a measuring tape line, his notebook and pencil, and was



soon absorbed in his work. He always run his lines in such a manner that no suspicion would mar the fitness of his calculations, and yet he managed to keep his range of vision on every part of the premises. At the noon-tide hour he leisurely ate his lunch, and smoked his pipe with a genuine relish.

The magnificent residence loomed up behind the park wall with a lonesome grandeur that was chilling. No children played upon the lawns, or made the hours lighter with their joyous laugh. Only the curling of smoke from one of the terra cotta chimneys, and the passing and repassing of the trained servants, indicated occupancy. Mr. MacKenzie was well pleased when the young accountant relieved him.

"Is the young girl still there?" Harry asked in a subdued tone of voice, and awaited the detective's answer with anxiety.

"She has never made any noise that I ever heard." The detective said this so dryly that Harry laughed heartily.

"Look!" the agency man exclaimed, "the girl remembers your laugh; a good omen for you. See, she parts the lace curtains and is observing us intently. Stand a little farther in the shade."

"Why should I be so cautious? I would much prefer that she should come to me. I do not like



the idea of prowling around other person's premises."

"No would-be Romeos for you in this case. You must follow Mr. Thompson's directions to the letter—no hacks, no cabs. When you get the girl out of the house walk a dozen of squares, and take the cars, find a preacher, and get married at once."

"Not on your life, sir; how do I know she may not be already married? I am willing to do anything honorable to save Madge. I must know what I am doing, sir."

"Have it your own way, lad; there are older heads than yours in the world; you must be the judge of your own actions."

"Good night, my lad, good night."

When the detective was gone, Harry made his way cautiously along the wall until he was opposite the window where Madge was standing. He crossed the lawn and stood directly under the window of her room. It was an easy matter to climb, hand over hand, up to the veranda where he could see into the room without being seen. "Poor Madge," he exclaimed; "she has been crying." There was no one in the chamber. He noiselessly opened the door and stood by the girl's side.

"Don't cry, my little playmate. Hush! do not



scream. I have come to save you, to marry you if you are still single."

"Marry me? Harry." She said this in a dazed way that showed that her mind was wandering. "Marry me? No! you do not mean what you say."

He raised her head from his shoulder, he looked long and intently into her eyes, and exclaimed: "The girl is a lunatic; persecution has unhinged her mind."

"I love you, Harry; I love you; do not leave me. I sought you everywhere. They were cruel to me."

"Madge, I heard a door open, I am sure. The clicking of the night-latch was too loud to be mistaken."

"In here, quick."

He glided into the closet where it was stifling. Skirts and dresses deadened the tones of the voices. It seemed that there were more than two persons in the room. The high pitch of the conversation plainly indicated that the murderers were quarreling. He listened with that intense-ness of nerves that made his hearing acute; the oaths of two men, the pleading of Madge, a desperate struggle, a scream from the woman, made his position unbearable. He threw back the door



of his prison and sprang to the center of the apartment.

He did not see the faces of the men that slammed the door behind them as they fled. He raised the inanimate form of Madge from the blood-stained carpet; he dashed water in her face; a look of horror made his face bloodless. Madge had the fatal knife in her hand, the man's throat was cut from ear to ear!



## CHAPTER V.

### HARRY IN PRISON.

“My God! what does it all mean?” he gasped in breathless astonishment. “This knife that I wrenched from Madge’s hand is mine; how did she get it? There is some villainous plot here. One of the voices resembles the voice of some one I know.”

“What an unhappy ending of this miserable affair,” the prisoner moaned. “I am in a felon’s cell with these irons on my wrists and ankles. I am accused of murdering a man I never saw in my life. A brooding despondency causes my head to ache; what does it all mean? Madge was not physically able to cut that stranger’s throat, yet she was standing over him with my knife in her hand.”

He pushed his hand into his pocket a dozen of times; his knife was not to be found. He ran his hand through his hair in a dazed manner and continued: “The dead man was strikingly like Mr. Thompson, as I now recall him to my mind.



I must have some explanation from the detective; until that time my lips are closed."

The next morning a daily paper was handed to him wherein he read: "A mysterious murder. A society man gone wrong. A package of money missing. The murderer shadowed for months. His mistress in a madhouse."

The unfeeling warden watched every changing expression of his face to base an opinion. The straight-forward, honest face that once was a passport anywhere had changed; his unshaven beard and neglected appearance confirmed the criticism, and every one who gazed at him through the grating acquiesced in the jailor's surmises.

Only a slight elevation of his eyebrows indicated the terrible feeling of horror as he read the last lines of the caption: "Madge in a madhouse!" These words burned into his brain, and yet the warden was standing there moulding public prejudice just as though his helpless victim was devoid of human feeling.

"What are you standing there for, you brute," exclaimed Claud, who so nobly defended Harry the night of the entertainment. "Do you think a man has no feeling? You are not paid for such intrusive impudence."

When the deputy withdrew, Claud placed his hand affectionately upon his friend's shoulder and



cheerfully remarked: "Look up, Harry; I want you to unbosom your very soul to me. I will clear you because I feel that you are a wronged man. No power on earth can change this verdict. The opportunity to serve you will be a godsend. To tell you the truth, my practice is so meager that I am a regular free lunch fiend."

"God bless you, Claud, for the noble sentiment that you expressed. I am afraid your case will end in failure. Look at these headlines; you can read them across the cell. Such items go a long way where public opinion is the judge. This, in turn, will influence the jury, and should I be cleared by a jury, these newspapers that now give me three columns, will, perhaps, use the smallest space in some obscure corner to notify the public of the exoneration."

"You take a gloomy view of the situation, Harry. Tut ! tut !! I shall not permit you to despond. Life is before you, my boy; tell to me how it all happened?"

"Seek Mr. Thompson, and bring him here at once. You will find him at the detective agency; and also deliver this sealed package in person, to whom it is addressed. You will find the gentleman also at the agency."

When the young lawyer departed, the accountant relapsed into the usual moody silence.



The reporters that sought to make a scoop were nonplussed at his reticence.

Claud hastened to the agency and inquired for Mr. Z. Thompson. They were unable to give him the desired information. He placed the sealed package in the hands of MacKenzie, who motioned him to a seat while the gentleman read the contents carefully and placed the envelope in his pocket. As he did so, he moved to the far corner of the office and said in a low tone of voice:

"Looks ugly for your young friend; strong circumstantial evidence against him; don't know how it is going to turn out, for you never know just how a jury will decide. Be assured of one thing, you can count on me from start to finish."

"What remuneration will you expect, Mr. MacKenzie? You know my friend has no money, and I am very sure that I am in a like condition, and when one is down, perhaps, you have heard of the proverbial kick, and the down hi'll part of the saying."

"Mr. Thompson has made all arrangements and left money in the safe for just such a contingency."

"What a noble man he is," exclaimed Claud, with enthusiasm; "not that I expect one cent as a fee; my friendship is not estimated by dollars and cents."



"Neither is mine," said the detective as he grasped Claud by the hand. "Thompson did me a favor once, and I am not the one to forget it. We are losing time. Go to his boarding house; here is the address, and see if he is at home. I have not seen him for two days; he is usually so prompt to report, each day. Come back at once; I will wait for you here."

Claud hastened to find the Madam who was busy with her household duties. She, nevertheless, vouchsafed him a respectful hearing.

"Is Mr. Thompson still boarding with you?" he politely asked.

"I have not seen him for two days. As he has paid his board in advance, I do not feel uneasy, neither do I care a baubee whether he ever returns to my establishment or not."

"Why do you speak so uncharitably," Claud asked. "I should think such customers were worth the seeking?"

"He is a detective. I hate men who are always prowling around after some devilment. I have not seen him since the night of the murder." The quick eyes noted the little confusion of her manner as she said this, and he increased her confusion by saying: "I believe you know where Mr. Thompson is."

"I presume you are a detective, too?"



"No, Madam, I am not, but I am a judge of human nature. You have in some way been benefited by Harry Monteet's imprisonment, and the disappearance of the detective confirms this belief." He glanced at his watch; he was due at the agency in twenty minutes; he excused himself and hurried to keep his appointment. Mr. MacKenzie was walking rapidly from one side of the office to the other. He did not notice the entrance of the lawyer; he was digesting the contents of the package that he had taken from the safe. A slight *ahem!* from Claud caused him to turn squarely around and approach.

"Well, young man, what have you to say for yourself," he kindly asked. "Have you any news of my friend?"

"He has not been home since day before yesterday. I am sure she knows of his absence."

"I am sure that she is a female devil, backed by money. I have here a complete history of the case. I admire Thompson's skill; he was no ordinary man. He is working below his station in life. I will take up the trail where he stopped. We will go to the prison and interview the unfortunate man."

The detective and the lawyer stepped into the cell. The dim light made the prisoner's face a trifle paler. The gentleness of his breathing was



an indication that the death of the stranger did not lie heavily on his mind. The reaction of his exhausted nature made sleep a ministering angel that brought peace to the troubled heart.

"It is a pity to arouse him from so refreshing sleep. We will creep on tiptoe, and wait in the corridor where there are watch chairs. Do not speak of the case outside of this cell. I have my reasons for making the request."

"Certainly, Mr. MacKenzie; your wishes shall be a sacred law. I would never forgive myself if Harry's case should go against him through any fault of mine."

"Your friend is awake, we will return; stand at the door and keep a sharp lookout up and down the passage way, and on either side of the arch. You will then know why I made such a request."

"Claud, is that you? Is Mr. MacKenzie with you?"

"Mr. MacKenzie, let me introduce to you my friend, Harry Monteet." When the formality of the introduction was modified, Claud continued: "Remember, your life is in his hands, and all depends upon the information you give to him; don't be over magnanimous and try to play a dangerous part, and shield a crime at the expense of your honor."

"I am sure I appreciate your staunch friend-



ship very much. The lies in the case are before the public. Mr. Thompson can tell you all the positions even better than myself. I was merely the proverbial chestnut."

"Mr. Thompson has mysteriously disappeared. The entire force are on the hunt for him; so far, not a trace has been discovered."

A startled expression came to Harry's face. "Gone! gone!" he repeated in a dazed manner; "there is foul play somewhere. I will not believe that he has deserted me."

"Nevertheless he has gone. You can stake your existence that he has not deserted you. Answer some questions that will be of importance when the case comes up. The evidence is very strong against you. How do you account for the package of money that was found on your person? A bundle of new money is a dead give away, because the bills were consecutively numbered just as they came from the sub-treasury."

"Found a package of money on my person!" Harry exclaimed in astonishment. "The money you describe was part of a special deposit in the inner safe of the big safe. No one to my knowledge has molested the contents for years."

"Did you have the combination to this inner compartment?"



"Yes, for the reason that important papers were filed away."

"Did you ever have occasion to examine these papers, or count the bank notes that made this special deposit?"

"I never counted the money because it was a special deposit. The papers were transactions of the whaling vessels that we overhauled when the ships were in port."

"Good, very good. I like the way you answer, young man. Now, tell me, did any one have the combination besides yourself?"

"Yes, both of the partners had the combination."

"Don't you think that it was very unbusiness-like to be responsible for cash under such circumstances?"

"As I understood it, they did not hold me responsible."

"Strange that you should have thought so, considering the fact that theft has been added to the charge of murder in your case."

"Do you mean to tell me that Blanche's father made such a charge as that? The idea is preposterous."

"The affidavit is signed by both of your employers. Do you know if the balance of the deposit is in the inner safe, and can you give me the



reason why that large amount of money should remain so long untouched?"

"The stranger that placed the money with the firm deposited gold in the bank and received gold notes in return."

"Can you give me the name of the bank?"

"Yes, the name of the bank is ———. I think the transaction occurred five years ago, if my memory serves me correctly."

"Did the globe-trotter ever return to claim the money?"

"No, sir, he never came back. He may be dead for all that I know."

"Would you know the man if you should meet him again?"

"I would not, because I was busy at the time and paid no particular attention to the deal."

"Do you know how long it takes one of these whaling vessels to make a round trip?"

"That depends on the luck they have."

"Can you give me the names of these ships, and the dates of their sailing? Pardon me for asking so many questions; your life and good name depend on your answers."

"The Jonna, The Catch and the Sylvia. Do you suspect any one? Or, in other words, have you a clue to the real murderer?"

"In this detective business one must not be



certain of anything, we so often draw wrong conclusions from so-called positive information. Now about the knife you had in your hand when you were arrested; could you swear that it was really your knife?"

"Claud gave it to me not long since. He would identify it beyond a doubt. It had my name engraved on the handle."

"Had you used it much, and how long have you had it?"

"Seven or eight months, as near as I can remember. I used it roughly sometimes, drawing tacks and opening cans."

"Did it have any nicks in the blade that you can remember; if so, whereabouts on the blade?"

"Near the point, you will find three deep nicks, and one at the end nearest the handle."

"Now, my young friend, give me the particulars of the murder as you saw it. How did you happen to have your knife in your hand? Was it in self-defense that you cut the man's throat?"

Harry was silent. Madge's honor was at stake. He could explain away the night adventure and tell how he climbed up the iron lattice work to the gallery above and entered her bedroom, but he would not inform the detective how he concealed his person in the closet. The papers would send these circumstances broadcast to



the world and blacken a fair name. He felt assured that the person or persons that committed the deed would never speak of it, and thus implicate themselves.

“ I will never tell you, so do not insist upon this unpleasant part of the interview. If you can clear me on the evidence that you already possess, well and good; if you cannot, let the law take its course. I certainly will not tell to any one the horrors of that awful night, let the consequences be what they may.”

“ Perhaps you will change your mind when your nervous excitement is quieted. In the meantime, I will see what can be done with the evidence you have so freely given to your lawyer friend and myself. Mr. Thompson informed me that his detective outfit was in a closet on the north side of your room. I may have to make use of the odds and ends that, as Shakespeare says, ‘ make a man play many parts.’ We would also beg that you will allow us to use the room for consultation.”

“ Here is the key. You will find coal and wood in abundance. Claud, why not use it for your sleeping purposes? I have a lease that has three or four years to run; I may never use it again.”

“ Tut! tut! lad, none of that. All I request of you is to keep your mouth shut, and we will make



a masterly defense, that will be an honor to your chum here."

"Did you keep a keen lookout for intruders?" the detective asked.

"I noticed a measly-looking lawyer promenading at the far end of the corridor. I think he was too far away to hear what we were saying. I know him; a worse specimen of humanity was never created." The detective looked soberly at the advocate as he said this.

"You would never make a detective; there is an uncertainty now that makes the evidence doubtful. How do we know that he did not hear everything we said, and if he did, how easy it would be to make the two knives agree in every particular."

"Then there were two knives," Claud eagerly inquired.

"I did not say so, my young friend. How easily that lawyer could substitute one for the other, and thus fix the deed upon Harry with fatal results. I do not even know that there are two knives. I am sure of one thing, that the prisoner has been victimized in some way. Can you give me the lawyer's name?"

"I thought so; the most dangerous man that one could have anything to do with, because he



is unprincipaled. Go to the other end and listen; can you hear what I am saying?"

"Not one whisper can I hear."

With a parting injunction to Harry, the detective and lawyer quitted the cell and walked leisurely to the bookkeeper's sanctum. The cautious Scot looked carefully backwards. The attenuated form of Mr. ——— glided from one corner to the next. "Do not look around; that eavesdropper has been following us for five squares; we will turn down this alley and enter a secluded courtyard that used to be named The Five Courts, or, rather, The Five Points. He will fight shy of the place because Thompson has one on him."

The ruse proved successful. A quiet laugh from Mr. MacKenzie was all the attorney received for his inquisitiveness. When they mounted the steep flight of steps that led to the sanctum, Claud lighted the coal in the grate. The warmth of the place made them more sociable. Points of difference were settled and plans for the future were adopted.



## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THOMPSON'S TRAIL.

"It is a perilous undertaking for me," the detective mentally thought. "I was a sailor once, I will be a sailor again. Thompson befriended me when I was in a dangerous position. No halting now; besides, he has both ends of the trail. I can do nothing until his return."

"I could not tell the young man." He said this while he was donning a sailor's garb. When all of the changes had been made to his satisfaction, he gave to his walk a peculiar rolling gait that made the disguise complete, and betook himself to the clearing house, and glanced along the column of ups, arrivals, and departures of crafts of all kinds.

"Can you tell me when a whaler will sail for the Arctic regions?"

"You mean a school-teacher," the pleasant clerk replied.

"I mean a sure enough ship with hull, mast, sails and spars." I can use the witty gentleman,



the sailor thought, as he added: "That is not so bad; do you often have such spells?"

"Only at school, when I wished that all the whalers were at the North Pole."

"No doubt of it; at all events, the whalers seem to have sharpened your wits in a wonderful manner."

"Is it not cold enough here without tempting Providence up in that forsaken region of the earth?"

"When a man is busted he does not mind the degrees of heat and cold. I learned that these skippers paid very full wages."

"You want to ship, then? There is a vessel now in port that just returned from a successful cruise." Then, he added, in a low, confidential tone of voice: "The skipper is a brute."

"I do not mind that; I do my duty and ask no questions."

"You are easily pleased. You bet you can get employment; one-third of the crew jumped him."

"Where do they touch glasses? I will thank you for the advice, and take my bearings accordingly."

"In a grog shop near the North Pier. The sign of the arrow will guide you all right."

When the business of the day had been at-



tended to, Mr. MacKenzie gave an extra hitch to his belt (wherein was thrust an ugly looking mess knife) and made his way to the dram house, where he found the crew of the *Jonna* making a night of it. Quietly he seated himself at the table and joined in the conversation. The little group were not so noisy as those at the tables near the door. "Is there a chance to ship on the *Jonna*, mess-mates?" he asked.

"All the chance you want. What port do you hail from?" the mate inquired. As he said this, he gave a squinting leer at the detective, and waited for an answer.

"I have not been aboard a ship for a good twelve months; you see my flippers are soft as the blubber of a whale. I was raised on the sea, the old life comes back to me. I am no landsman to run afoul of every breaker."

This was greeted with a laugh, and some knowing winks. Mr. MacKenzie threw a quarter of a dollar on the table and called for more drinks. When the glasses were emptied, the luck of the cruise was cussed and discussed. The danger of the service, the brutality of the skipper, all furnished food for thought.

The description of the men that were lost did not correspond with the description that made Thompson a striking person. The detective did



not know that his friend sailed on the Jonna. From the skipper's makeup, he came to the conclusion that this ruffian was the person selected to do such dirty work.

"Where does the skipper cast anchor?" the would-be sailor asked.

"Haul to, shipmate, till I take my reckoning; he is spliced to as sorry a craft as ever weathered a squall."

"Where can I overhaul him? I am close reefed and am scudding under bare poles."

"Take your bearings on the Clearing House, and mind ye, make the papers trim as a land shark can make them. No harm for the anchoring." In a low tone of voice he continued: "The purser is out of the way when we are ashore; it is a good twelve month since we have seen the color of our greenbacks; it's either ship or no pay."

Mr. MacKenzie drank the last sailor under the table, and hastened to find Claud. A rough shake awakened him. The apparition of the seaman startled the attorney, who sat upright in Harry's bed. He was stupefied till the hearty laugh of the detective reassured him.

"You don't know me in this rig, my young friend, do you? Hush! no explanations; my best friend would not know me. I am to sail on the



Jonna at ten, to-morrow. I have a suspicion that Thompson has been foully dealt with; it is only a suspicion. I will be homeward bound six months from now. You must fight for time when the case comes up. I shall depend on your skill as a lawyer to help Harry."

"All right, you can count on my efforts in that direction. Can nothing be done in the meantime? It is a long time for Harry to stay in prison."

"As I said before, Thompson must be found. He has some information that I do not possess. It is two o'clock; I will turn in and get what sleep I can."

At nine in the morning the detective entered the portals of the Clearing House and awaited the coming of the skipper. A forbidding-looking seaman was talking to the clerk, whose wit was a distinct mark of affability. Several times they glanced in his direction. Then the skipper shuffled towards Thompson's friend and asked in a rough manner:

"Want ter ship on the Jonna? Staunch a craft as ever sailed the sea. Good pay, hard work and plenty of it."

"Aye! aye! sir. It's what I am here for. I'm a bit tender like, sir, but on the sea you'll find no better hearty afloat."

The skipper had a repulsive, sinister counte-



nance. His snaky black eyes overhauled the recruit from stem to stern. He shook his head doubtfully and said: "Did you sail before the mast, or aft? You are a suspicious craft. I'll take ye. It don't take long to break a lad in; a rope's end is a wonderful persuader. Where is your kit?"

There was no hearty heave ho! as the click of the capstan at every turn brought the stocks of the anchor up to the hawse hole, where it was secured by an extra turn of the chain. The sullen looks of the men, the skipper's curses as he shouted his orders in a fog horn voice, the fussy little tug that towed the Jonna out of the harbor, were poor promises for the detective who received unusual attention. His work was done with such neatness and dispatch that the skipper paid no further attention to him but went below, and called the mate to him.

MacKenzie climbed down the forward hatch and swung his hammock where he could keep a weather eye on the forecastle. The watches were set, the sails set to catch the quartering breeze that sent them along at ten knots an hour. The fresh salt air came to him like the breath of his earlier days. The glumness of the crew was so much material to work upon. It might have been better and it might be worse.



Four bells struck; as the crew was shorthanded the watches came oftener. The detective cast a quick, sharp look at the seamen that were standing watch with him. He was a good judge of human nature. Instinctively he felt that these sailors could be depended upon in case of an emergency.

The stillness of early morning hovered over the ship. The snoring of the tired salts, the creaking of the cordage, the spray from the cut water, the dull glare of the binnacle, made silence a wise precaution. As the hour wore on the three sailors whispered in a low, confidential way that could not be heard at the main hatchway.

"You lost three of the crew overboard?" the new seaman asked in a whisper. "Not much luck about that. How about the fourth man?"

"Belay there, messmate! Shu! easy. Foul play. The poor devil! they drugged his grog at the sign of the arrow and took him aboard. The skipper beat him unmercifully."

"Go on, heave ahead my hearty. What were his reasons for such belating? What had the sailor lad done?"

"We beat up around and off the shore of New Foundland for a month, when a lad from the top gallant yards sang out, 'She blows!' Two miles to the windward as fine a catch as ever spouted



came to the surface. The ship's boats were swung from the davits, and manned by Edmonson and three men, the poor devil was as fine a seaman as ever cast the log. The chase was exciting; other boats followed; the first yawl ran alongside and gave the whale a good one over the right flipper. The reel was hot with the paying out of the line. In a moment the blower turned and crushed the boat like a shell. Edmonson was saved, and three went under. The skipper had orders to kill the saved man, and he tried to run the harpoon through him. The crew stood hard by their messmate; for a month the brute swore at the crew. Fear kept him from braining the lad with a marlinspike. The Jonna sailed well up to the shore of Greenland, where the skipper put him ashore and left him to die of hunger and cold."

"Will the ship sail to that point?"

"As straight as her cut-water can pint. It's luck hauls the Jonna has for sailing in them waters. Ye'r as trim a lad in the rigging as one would wish to find; kin ye handle a ship as well?"

"I was raised on the sea; my father was a captain of one of the largest merchantmen that ever left New Bedford. Why do you ask?"

"The skipper is a bad one; he owes the crew the full wages of one cruise; never the cent of his



money hev we seen. We've about made up our minds to sail the ship on our own account, throw the skipper overboard and kill the mates."

"Don't do that; the courts will hang you for piracy—hang you to the yard arm, every mother's son of you. Make up your time; when we return I have a young lawyer friend who will sequester the ship and cargo for the amount of your wages."

"If we find your messmate will you join us? Here is the roughest hand that ever braced a main sail in a blow; put your flipper in mine and the paper is signed."

"Can we count on the crew?" the detective whispered as he looked around with a suspicious air.

"Aye! aye! messmate. The marks on our backs are scores to be settled, sooner or later; ye may trust us for that."

"Are you the leader, or is some other salt the man to be depended upon. I notice they are heavily armed and seem to keep together, or at least in striking distance of each other."

"Call me Red Ned. Ye've the main top braces and mesilf the mizzensail; together we'll put back; a bether crew niver sailed a ship."

Eight bells rang out sharply on the frosty air. Red Ned and his companion turned in when the next watch was set. As they climbed down the

L. of C.



hatchway Red Ned thrust his great, brawny hand in MacKenzie's and the compact was sealed.

The skipper kept a watchful eye on the new addition to the crew. There was something about the set of the lower jaw that indicated bull dog tenacity. The brute felt that he was standing in the presence of a seaman of no ordinary intelligence.

"How long have you been ashore, my hearty?" the skipper asked, with an air that meant to be pleasant, but which resembled the growl of a savage.

"A number of years, sir." The sailor gave a backward scrape of his foot, and touched his skull cap with a respectful salute.

"Ye're a neat lad and do yer work well; yer flipper's tinder as the breast of a spring chicken; yer gab's proper, too proper for the likes of us. I do na like too much sail in the top gallant rigging. I took ye, I took ye, fur bether or wurse, liken the parson says. I wer short handed or the likes of ye wuld nevher crossed the waterways."

Three more ruffianly men could not be found. The grog had blunted the bronzed visages with a puffy appearance that gave a reddish tinge to their complexions. The short stubby whiskers added to the whole. A grim sullenness completed the picture.



On the fourth night Red Ned and the detective were seated between the foremast and the fore-hatchway. The ship's prow tugged at the hawse-hole where the chain grated with a monotonous rasp against the side of the ship.

They were anchored off the Island of Farewell. The precipitous headland was clear of ice at this season of the year, and towered above them to the sky. The passage to this point was a succession of tacks to windward. They did this to avoid the icebergs that now and then drifted southward.

"Ned, what induced the skipper to anchor here? It is the roughest spot on the globe. The current that is sweeping from east to west strains every plank in the ship's keel. The ice will be forming, then we will be frozen in for the winter; the storms have a special grudge against the headland."

"Not so loud, messmate; the mate's ugly phiz is keeping a sharp lookout this way; he is standing by the steersman; did ye hear him order him to hold her head hard agin the current; do ye ken her reckoning?"

"Latitude, 59-49, Longtitude, 43-54 West."

"Ye ken well; ye're a gude wan; sailed in these waters, hev ye?" exclaimed Ned in delight,



as he scratched his bushy red hair in a contemplative manner.

"I have been here half a dozen times. I am afraid of this delay. The wind ain't in the right quarter. I wish there was more sea room. We are liable to have a blow at any time. Some devilment in the wind as sure as my name is Mac-Kenzie."

The red nappy mane of Ned made four square turns to the four cardinal points of the compass and settled towards the eye of the wind. "Can't see it, messmate."

"Listen! The vessel is pounding like a sledge-hammer. It is well her cables are strong, or we would go to pieces in an hour."

"Wake up the skipper, Ned; we have no time to lose."

"And get a cursing, messmate."

"Anything but a beamsend." The keen mind of the detective was on the alert. The days were rounding into months, yet he was no nearer to the object that brought him on the perilous voyage. The three officers of the ship were vigilant; fortunately the crew while they did not avoid him yet they held aloof from him, which circumstance disarmed suspicion.

"Go, Ned; no time to lose."

The tall brawny seaman disappeared down the



main hatchway and soon returned accompanied by the skipper, who gave one look at the barometer and gave his orders to the mate. The shrill whistle of the mate emptied the hammocks; its sound had a hundred echoes in the frowning cliff.

The lads heaved at the capstan bars with a will, the sheet anchor came up with a thud, the ship's bow caught the full strength of the current and swung off three points. The men scrambled to the boomkins and close-reefed the jib, the sails were clewed close to the braces, and two lads were at the wheel.

"Here is a glass of grog to wet your whistle, Ned. Your vigilance saved the old tub; we would have gone ashore stern first; who was on the watch with you?"

The glum skipper turned on his heel and with an oath said: "I made a fluke taking that land lubber on board. I am sure he is not what he seems; he is seaman enough to know that I had no orders to hold the ship in the channel; h'll never sail back to port to tell it."

"Ned, I want to say a word to you on our next watch, which will be to-night. I have pledged my word to the crew, and I shall expect them to stand by me when I need them."

"No fear of that, sir. We are beating up to the shores of Greenland where the skipper put



your friend ashore. The skipper is watching us."

When the watch was set, Ned and his messmate drew farther away from the forehatch and seated themselves where the jib-boom was clewed to the deck.

"Ned, tell me all about my friend. Did they put him ashore without food or shelter?"

"It was the skipper's orders; we rigged him fore and aft for a bluffer, gave him a gun and ammunition."

"What were his chances?"

"Poor enough unless a stray band of Esquimaux picked him up. Your friend is buried in some drift; no human craft could weather such a gale. The snow was drifting everywhere, the wind was blowing great guns."

"You think it is useless to make the attempt?"

"Aye! aye! messmate; you are game. We will not be the ones to cut adrift from you. Blast my maintop, how are we going to manage the skipper and his dirty set?"

"Our chance will come. From the way that brute has been handling the craft there is something in the wind."

The next morning the skipper was sweeping the horizon in search of blubber. All hands were piped to quarters, the ship's course was changed;



with a favorable breeze they overhauled a great dark mass that was churning the sea a dozen cable lengths ahead. The boats were lowered and manned, the flash of the oars, the regular dip of the blades, the excitement of the chase that lasted all day was a change from the routine of a sailor's life.

MacKenzie was ordered with the detail that manned the skipper's gig. The doomed man followed every movement of the brute who tried in vain to bully and curse him. He obeyed every order with alacrity, at the same time his hand felt for his mess knife whose sheath of a snake's skin glistened with an ugly luster.



## CHAPTER VII.

### FOUL PLAY.

Some thought came to the skipper. The chase was abandoned, the boats were hoisted to their davits. The bully passed the grog around; the tin cups were full but not the seamen. A warning signal from the detective gave them a hint which they were not slow to adopt.

As Mac passed Red-headed Ned he whispered, "be ready when I let something fall heavily."

"How's your fist, my hearty?" the skipper asked. "Ned says you can figure, too; take this paper and put down what I call out."

Every item from an anchor to a marlin spike was tabulated in the seaman's best style. "Have you come to the cargo?"

"Aye! aye! sir. I am there now."

"Put down twenty tanks of oil, two thousand gallons to the tank."

"Sir, we have not a gallon of oil on board."

"Put it down," roared the bully in a fury. "Not a word from your lips; I know what I am about."



"Aye! aye! sir; down it is."

"Put there two thousand seal skins."

"Two thousand it is, sir; and no questions asked."

"Three thousand pounds of whalebone. Have you room at the bottom for more?"

"Here is another piece of writing paper."

"One ton of cryolite. It's there straight as the ship's keel, and ye hev done it well; now add it all up and see how much it is worth. Here is a list of the prices."

The cunning eyes of the three watched the busy fingers multiply and add, as they indolently pulled at as many short pipes. "What are your figures, my lad?"

"Eighty thousand, four hundred and sixty-three dollars," the reckoner replied, as he passed the sheets over to the skipper whose face softened with satisfaction as he said: "Ye hev dun it well, my lad. Step into that stateroom and hand me down that black bottle from the shelf; the one with the cork out; it is something that will oil your guzzler away down."

The shelf upon which the black bottle was supposed to be was higher than the detective's head. There were other bottles in addition to the one with the cork out. He stood upon an empty keg and caught the bottle with his left



hand around the bulging neck. With his right hand he drew from his jacket a vial which contained laudanum. He emptied the contents of the vial into the whiskey.

The impatient growl of the skipper hastened his movements. "Avast there, me hearty! Be lively about it, we are dry as fishes."

"Aye! aye! sir! The one with the cork out is not full." He said this because a bundle of letters was on the same shelf with the liquor. The handwriting was familiar. "What a lucky find for Thompson," he thought, as he climbed down from the keg and placed the bottle on the mess table in the cabin. "It is almost full." As he said this he gave the contents a vigorous shake to make the effect more certain.

"It's old Scotch, the body's thar." With this explanation he filled the dirty tumblers to the edges. "Not yet, belay there, the signing must be done; call the crew down, my lad."

The skipper had a good word for each seaman as he wrote in the rudest fashion his name to the inventory, and with a scrape and a bow withdrew to the deck where an additional ration of grog was issued. A warning sign from the detective was returned with a grateful recognition.

"Mac, take this glass of whiskey, my lad. I did not take to you at the start; the wind has



veered to a softer quarter. I intended to make you walk the plank. I don't know why." He said this reflectively while he sipped his grog. "You never befouled me." He had already gulped down his liquor and absent-mindedly appropriated the tumblerful that he had poured out for Mac. "Never mind, lad, there is more in the locker."

"I am sure of that, sir."

The grog was getting the better of the skipper and his mates. The old bullying manner returned, as he roared: "Do ye knaw why I had ye draw the paper, my hearty?"

"Suppose you'll be on the sea till you gig seals and secure sperm oil enough to make the figures good," the scribe replied.

"I am going to scuttle the old scow."

"My God," the detective groaned, "you don't mean it; you are joking!"

A roar of laughter followed this startling piece of information. When the mirth had subsided the skipper continued: "The Jonna has sailed her last trip; she has been condemned as unseaworthy by the landmen; her owners have insured her for the full amount; down she goes to Davy Jones' locker, with crew and all thrown in for trimmings."

"Great God! man, you are not going to send the crew to their death in such a cruel way."



"We owe them half of the value of the paper in wages. I have a score to settle with them; down they go."

While the brutes were roaring with laughter the detective noticed the suspicious movements of the scullion and the steersman. They had augers in their hands. He saw the gleam of the steel as they crept stealthily down in the hold of the *Jonna*. It was a moment of anxious suspense to the principal actor in this terrible tragedy. The laudanum seemed slow in its action. He could hear the steady boring down in the rancid darkness. Once in a while the faint glimmer of the lantern cast a beam of light upwards.

The drowsy heads fell forward on the table. Mac had little time to spare. He raised a tumbler high over his head and brought it down with a crash that shivered it to small pieces. He heard the quick shuffling of feet on deck and the cabin was filled with men.

"Man the pumps, quick; we've no time to lose; secure the devils that are boring holes in the ship's keel." The order was obeyed with a hearty "aye, aye, sir." He could hear the steady stroke of the piston; he could hear the flow of the bilge water as it flowed along the waterways, and the plunge of the stream as it flowed from the scuppers into



the sea. Then came the welcome sound: "All right below, sir." The pump valves scraped, the ship was saved.

The skipper, the mates, the scullion, and the helmsman, were securely ironed and confined in one of the bulkheads in the forecastle. It was with difficulty that the detective restrained the crew from murdering these wretches, whose bullying threats fell on heedless ears. In vain the skipper threatened a rope's end, and a yard arm, for an act of piracy that deprived him of his ship. MacKenzie was resolute. When he was certain the prisoners were properly secured he called the seamen together and said:

"Red Ned, you will act as first mate; upon you will depend the safety of the *Jonna*. Ben, you will act as second mate; do your duty well. As we sail northward, keep a lookout for blubber; we will stow away enough to pay you the wages due you to the time of our dropping anchor in the harbor of ——."

"Put the *Jonna* about, we will luff up to the point where my friend was put ashore."

"Aye! aye! sir, about it is; the wind is in the right quarter; we will send her along at a twelve knot run."

Affairs had changed on the vessel. The orderly manner in which the *Jonna* was handled in-



spired the men with a respect that was mingled with gratitude. The ruffianly orders that were mingled with curses were no longer heard. The sight of armed officers no longer gave to the salts that sullen, hang-dog visage that makes a petty tyrant a dictator to be dreaded.

With the keys that he had taken from the skipper's pocket he opened the stout cedar chest that was securely bound with brass trimmings. He added the stray letters he found in the locker to the bundle that he found on the shelf where the whiskey was. Some were postmarked London. He opened two or three of them. They were from James Finn, Barrister, eighty-six Temple Court.

"I don't know anything about Thompson's business. Something deeper here than I can manage. I will keep these for him. They may be valuable in some way. Here is a photograph of a stylish woman; I wonder if it is Madam V——. I never met her, consequently I am in doubt. This goes with the letters. What next? A cravat stained with blood. I must have been careless. I should have gone more into the evidence of crime, then these guilty trophies would have given me a history of the case. It may be the property of the murdered man, and it may not have belonged to him. A suit of citizen's clothes



at the bottom of the chest, also stained with blood. The coat is torn in three places. I will not be able to secure this garment, but I will make a note of the tailor that made it together with the address; also a description of the coat. He replaced every article that was too bulky to take with him. He placed the prisoner's property in the inner pocket of his pea jacket and climbed down into the bulkhead where a lantern gave a sickly glare and a most offensive odor.

"Who gave you the power to put me in irons, and confine me in this dark hole? Belay me, I was a sucker to let you come aboard; ye gab was too slick. I am a fool for the want of sense."

"Who gave you orders to make a false inventory that you might collect the insurance? By whose authority were you going to send this old scow to the bottom, and send men to their death because you owed them half of the value of the cargo?"

The skipper was silent. Something told him that the interrogator was no ordinary person. He was glum because he knew that the money that was behind him would be more ready to help him if he kept the secret closely guarded.

"What port do you sail to?" the skipper asked. He spoke with a better accent; his words



were well chosen and the sentences more grammatical.

"Heading for the port of ———, as straight as the Jonna will sail. You don't like the thought of going to prison, do you? It ain't a pleasant prospect; in for murder. Why have you changed your manner of speech? You did not deceive me; perhaps you deceived others; who are you, anyway?"

No answer was vouchsafed to these questions. The thick lips were more tightly drawn, the scowl on his face was ferocious as he turned on his side and remained silent.

Twice MacKenzie placed his hand upon the lapel of his jacket. The sight of the silver star would, perhaps, have opened the lips of the skipper, but a better idea came to him. Thompson was working out the case in his own way. A mistake now would put the guilty persons on their guard and hinder the course of events. For this reason he kept his identity concealed not only from the prisoners but also from the crew.

Red Ned touched his cap with his left hand, and with his right pointed off to the left in the direction of land. "Two days' sail with such a breeze will send the Jonna to the shore where your friend was landed."

"Does the skipper know where we are



bound?" The detective asked this for the reason that such information would be fatal to Harry and his case.

"No wan that I ken."

"Caution the lads. I cannot tell you the reason now; when we get to port you will understand my desire for caution."

The anchor paid out the cable with a grating sound; the headland was just ahead. The desolate waste of ice fields that stretched as far north as the vision could reach made MacKenzie shiver. He came prepared for the emergency.

A hundred busy thoughts came to him like a flash as he turned to Red Ned and said: "If I do not return in five days, sail for Julianehaab. There is a missionary station there. Hand these papers to the consul. He will send a guard to the ship and relieve you of the prisoners, and also give you authority to take the ship back to \_\_\_\_\_."

"About the pay, sir; how about that?"

"I have also made arrangements for that. Keep the ship in motion and come for me in five days."

A detail from the Jonna tramped on the desolate land where flaws and fissures made the search difficult. They found the carcass of a young polar bear with slashes of meat cut from its body.



From this point he pushed forward alone. For two days he wandered here and there, gliding along on his snow shoes and feeling his way with a pole. The ruins of an ingelow plainly indicated that his friend had fallen in with a tribe of Esquimaux.

An old spyglass from the *Jonna* was an aid that his thoughtfulness provided; with its aid he avoided the danger of that search. He skirted the ridges that were so deceptive and kept a sharp lookout for herds of reindeer. The seventh day, by the extreme range of the ship's glass, he discovered a large bunch that were heading towards him.

The wind was blowing in the direction of the game, which caused a stampede. He was not discouraged. Sooner or later, a tribe of natives would trail them. "What luck!" he exclaimed. "Either the wolves have scented the game, or aid is in sight. I see a great commotion; they are coming this way." He unslung his repeating rifle and laid flat in the snow. As the herd swept by him he fired with deliberate aim and brought down as noble a specimen as ever backed his horns. He sat on the body and waited for the hunters to approach. The sharp frosty air had a hundred echoes as it drifted to him. The snarling and barking of the Esquimaux dogs, the keen



swish and crack of the long lashes of the short handled whips, the shouting of the natives as they came dashing up to him in a run, was his reward for all of the dangers and hardships he had so bravely borne.

He tried to make them understand that he was searching for a white man that had been put ashore some miles up the coast. A great joy came to him as they made him understand by signs that there was a stranger in their settlement. The carcass of the reindeer was lashed to one of the sledges. Upon this MacKenzie seated himself, and men, dogs and sledges glided over the ice and snow with great smoothness and evenness.

The settlement was a day's journey to the north. The barking of the dogs that remained at home, the screaming of the women and children as they rushed forward to meet the hunters, was a welcome that stirred the detective's heart.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THOMPSON RESCUED.

MacKenzie crawled on his hands and knees through the opening of the ingelow, which was a hemisphere of solid ice with an opening in the top, the only outlet for the smoke that was sometimes stifling. The interior was oppressively warm. The females were stripped to the waist, the children were naked.

He did not recognize Thompson, whose eyes were sore, whose face was dirty and unshaven. The seal-skin clothing that covered his body was partially removed.

"This is Thompson," he said, "the long lost friend that befriended me once when we were shipwrecked in the tropics."

He did not disturb the drowsy man. While he was waiting for the surprise that might dethrone reason, he drew from his pocket string after string of bright colored glass beads and placed them around the necks of the females, young and old. The same love of adornment manifest-



ed itself in these far away natives of Greenland, whose joyous antics were ludicrous. Repeatedly they kissed his hands, and in a dozen of ways indicated their appreciation of his kindness.

At length Mr. Thompson awoke; the shouting aroused him. With a fixed stare he gazed at the stranger and said: "In God's name, who are you that addresses me in my native tongue?"

"Is it indeed you, my old friend Mac; and you came to find me? You risked your life in this land of desolation and ice for me?"

Tears were trickling down his cheeks as he said this. In an odd, affectionate way he grasped MacKenzie's hand in both of his, and stroked it gently downwards. All the while he stared in a frightened manner, as if he expected the apparition to vanish like a dream.

"Thompson, cheer up; we will be away from here by the day after to-morrow. The ship is waiting to take you back to ———, where your presence is urgently needed. I could not follow the thread of your investigation, although I had the directions and the papers you left."

"I could not tell you more because a great mystery is behind it all. Be patient; you shall know the full circumstances when the proper time arrives."



"And Harry, what of him?" Thompson eagerly inquired.

"Still in prison, awaiting your return. Tell me how you came to this iceland; by fair means or by foul means?"

"The night of Harry's arrest I walked to Pier No. — with the hope of receiving a letter from England. The vessel was already overdue. As she had not arrived I strolled up to 'Sign of The Arrow,' to take a stiff Scotch. I hardly reached the saloon when a blow on my head knocked me senseless. When I recovered my wits I was aboard the *Jonna*, bound for the Arctic regions. The skipper treated me brutally. Through the pluck of the crew my life was spared. I was sent ashore to perish with the cold. I met some Esquimaux hunters who have treated me with great kindness."

"I shipped on the *Jonna*. Your enemy, and the two mates, are in irons in the bulkhead forward. The ship will be off shore in three days from this time. The punishment of the brutes is your privilege."

"Not on your life, my friend. When I return to the city, remember I am to all intents and purposes dead. I can work with a freer hand because they feel that I am out of the way. It is the hardest case I ever had in my life, because



there is money behind the villains we wish to run down." A huskiness came to his voice as he asked news of Madge. "Tell me, Mac, is she all right? I mean, how did she stand the strain of that meeting?"

"I read in the papers that she was not in her right mind."

"Not in her right mind?" Thompson wearily exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that her mind is entirely deranged?"

"I only know what the papers have printed." Again the words of the rescuer were repeated: "Come! come! this will never do; your mind is wandering, my friend. You will need all of the sense you were born with, and then you will not have enough. There is Harry in prison, Madge in the asylum, and yourself in a god-forsaken country. How the scoundrels did you up. You must save your reputation or the agency will discharge you."

"I was the cause of Harry's misfortune." He said this in a slow, mournful way that was distressing. He set his teeth hard, arose, and beckoned Mac to follow. The icy air outside of the ingelow recalled Thompson's wandering thoughts. "We will go at once." He spoke in a dazed way and drew his hand slowly across his forehead.

"Not until day after to-morrow. The Jonna



is cruising around for a catch of blubber. You will feel better when morning dawns. Confound this part of earth's surface. Now that I reflect, there is no morning to dawn at this season of the year." It was a strange sight to see these two men out in the frosty air surrounded by glittering fields of ice, lighted by a background of electrical discharges. The long streamers that shot upward faded into a waving curtain of green, while the constellations far to the southward glowed with jeweled brilliancy.

The third day, the sledges with their long line of dogs that were harnessed by pairs, moved swiftly to north northwest. The pocket compass that Mac possessed caused them to move with great expedition. The seventh day the voyagers sighted the headland. No vessel was in sight. "It cannot be that I have miscalculated my reckoning. Perhaps the three prisoners have bribed the guards and secured control of the craft."

"Do not give up, Thompson. I did not secure the glass beads without a purpose. We will push forward to Julianehaab. It is only four days' journey from here." They made their wishes known to the obliging Esquimaux. Fortunately game was plentiful and the well-fed dogs performed the task without hardships. The excited detectives swept the harbor of the village with the



powerful ship glass. The *Jonna* was not among the vessels that rode at anchor in port.

A shout of gladness from the two Englishmen made a score of echoes from the ice-bound cliffs. An American ship was in the offing, ready to sail. Every breeze that straightened the folds of the stars and stripes was a promise of speedy deliverance. The consul signaled to the "Wave" for a boat. The transfer of the mariners was speedily accomplished. With a great sigh of relief they watched the inhospitable shores sink low and lower behind the horizon.

No contrary winds, or short, chopping seas delayed their homeward-bound trip. They reached ——— by a railroad train from Maine, and sought the sleeping rooms of the unfortunate accountant, where the effects of Thompson were stored.

"Mac, we must make no mistakes this time. It is necessary that we should report to the agency and renew our authority; otherwise what we do will not be worth a baubee. You report first, then I will follow. Our enemies will be quick to discover any changes in the force. As I said before, no mistakes this time. It was through some crookedness in our force that I was betrayed; I am sure of it, because I can put my finger on the man that was listening to the report that I was



making to the chief. Through this renegade will I trace the trouble to its source."

"Gad, Thompson, that is not a bad idea. I see it all. While you were watching your game one of the force was watching you. I think it is better to let me report you as present, so keep shady. They do not know that I know you; so much the better. While you are to the front I will guard the rear."

While this conversation was absorbing the attention of the detectives, a key was turned in the lock and Claud, the young attorney, entered. He stared at the weather-beaten seamen like one in a dream. "Can it be possible that you are the detectives that promised so much and performed so little? Harry is still in jail. His very name is almost forgotten, so many startling events have occurred since you left."

"Cool down, my young sprig of the law. Foul play made us the victims of a damnable plot to do away with us."

Thompson gave Claud a brief sketch of the adventure and cautioned the barrister to use a discreet silence in regard to the course of events. "Harry will be so relieved when I tell him how matters stand! Poor boy! he feels so friendless and deserted! It most broke his heart to think that you had left him to his fate when he was following your directions."



"Has Harry given you an account of his night's adventure?" Thompson asked. He had important reasons for the inquiry. "How could a young girl have the strength to commit such a terrible murder? There was a struggle. If the stranger had committed suicide, how did he get possession of the accountant's knife? If he had been killed, more than one person was accessory to the deed."

"I have been in close touch with Harry since his incarceration. Not one word have I heard from his lips. His summer-day friends have all deserted him. I tried to get him out on bail, but the Judge ruled that it was not aailable offence. I have done everything that it was possible to do under the circumstances. I had no money and I had no one with influence to move the wheels of justice."

"The Judge who is to try the case is a close friend of Blanche's father," Thompson argued. "I saw this piece of information in the papers that I read on shipboard, after I was sandbagged at the grog-shop, near the head of Pier No. —."

"Upon what lines are you going to continue the investigation?" Claud asked. "I want to be useful in some way; since I am never to make my maiden speech as a lawyer, I will give up the practice and ask to be enrolled in the agency."

"The first thing to be done is to get our



young friend out of the prison. The next thing to be done is to reinstate him in his old position. He can be of service to me, but he must not know that we are using him for detective purposes. His fine sense of honor would rebel and ruin our best efforts."

"You do not mean to intimate that Blanche's father had anything to do with this miserable affair? My God! it would break his daughter's heart. She goes to the prison regularly to see Harry. The foolish fellow seems to be indifferent to the adoration of this noble woman."

A feeling of intense relief overpowered Mr. Thompson at this innocent piece of gossip. With a silent "amen!" he continued: "In less than a week I will have the boy at his desk. The duties will change the current of his sad, and, I am sorry to add, sensitive thoughts."

"You have not answered my question, Mr. Thompson. The gentleman that you suspect is one of the leading merchants of the city. Be careful how you act in this matter. It is bad enough to implicate Harry. Do not drag the sweet name of the daughter into the mire of scandal. You know what this means: a manifolding process that never gives back to the individual what has been filched from the honor of a good name."

"Claud, do not be sentimental where Harry's



life is concerned. Go to Mr. ——'s office, to-morrow, at three o'clock. Ask him to use his influence in a way that will change the opinion of his friend, the Judge. I will be seated near to you. Do not pay any attention to me. Plead with the senior member of the firm. If he still refuses, pretend that you are in a position to have him arrested for a crime that will send him to the penitentiary. Do this, and consider it your first lesson as a detective."

"You ask me to do such a thing as that when the hospitality of the house has been mine for years? Then, there is Blanche. How could I look the dear girl in the face? If her father should be guilty, how could I break her heart by telling her what I should conceal from her."

"Then you refuse to save Harry's life. No one but yourself can get this justice done. To the friend you say you love I am sorry you feel as you do about it, for all depends upon your tact in this matter. Mr. —— will, perhaps, do this without a threat, through the influence of his only child. Harry has been there too long already. Had I been here one year ago, to-day, he would have had his freedom long ago."

"I will do as you wish, Thompson, although it goes against the grain to betray the rights of hospitality."

"Make the threat with due caution; rather



do so by hinting. Look cautiously around and observe the change in the expression of his countenance. I will be reading a newspaper. To-morrow at three, remember."

When the steps of the conscientious attorney no longer sounded on the stairway, the detective, by the use of dyes and a false wig, changed his appearance so completely that MacKenzie was puzzled to identify the rough-weather sailor that was to all intents and purposes dead to the rogues that he was to mingle with again. His beard had grown to a suitable length. Madam V—— could neither pull it with a savageness that was painful, nor accuse him of swearing falsely by his beard. A pair of foreign-looking specs completed the disguise.

A puzzled expression spread slowly over his face as he stood at the entrance of his former boarding house. "How is this?" he said. "When I was here the place had a tumble-down appearance. The iron railing of the balcony has a fresh coat of paint and the entire front has been repaired and painted; new shutters, new locks. I will press this electrical button and the Madam will do the rest; so here goes."

A house-keeper asked him to be seated in a handsomely appointed parlor. "Fortune has smiled upon my ancient enemy," he said. "Perhaps the smile is a little shady. I hear the rustle



of silk." He gazed curiously at the elegantly-robed dame that swept into the parlor with an independent air that plainly betokened a surcease from harrowing bill collectors. His former neighbors at the table with their ravenous appetites (no doubt caused by sundry long miles of energetic exercise) were replaced by a better class of boarders, whose purses were deeper, whose appetites were more capricious. Curiously enough the Madam asked him for no reference. The charges were exorbitant; the business air that stated the terms made any objection worthless.

"She believes that I am dead. She knows that Madge is in the asylum. A knowledge of these surmises has wrought a wonderful change in this heartless creature. As she is an heir through direct descent, it becomes my duty to learn whence this lavish display of wealth."

A trim-looking servant showed him to his room that was luxuriously furnished. There was but one entrance to the apartment, a circumstance that pleased the detective. One key was an opening too many. Surrounded as he was by danger, the recollection of the manner in which he had been outwitted together with the savage treatment that had been unjustly dealt to him made him cautious. Three days of association in his quarters plainly indicated that the Madam was suspicious. His mechanical drawings, his



microscope, his mathematical instruments, reminded her of the detective that "pumped her dry," as she expressed it.

The following morning, Mr. Thompson through courtesy excused himself when the meal was half finished. He had his reason for doing so. The wily Madam would be unable to make detectives of her servants. Her personal supervision was a duty that she never neglected. With carefulness he noted the number of white-aproned waiters that glided around the well-served table like so many automatons. It was a matter of precaution with the detective; a matter that would place the winning cards in his hands. The silver tips that he placed beneath his plate, two or three times a week, oiled the hinges of the door of conscience and placed at his disposal the services of the shrewdest serving-man of the set.

Mr. Thompson was always looking for a letter that never came. He generally managed to intercept the mail that the postman brought to the door. He did it in such a way that the Madam did not suspect that the meek-looking professor was keeping a sharp eye on her correspondence; neither did she observe sundry pencil markings in his memorandum book which he always carried in his inside vest pocket. Thus all of the letters with a foreign postmark came under his personal in-



spection through the adroitness of the man he bribed.

"Some of these letters have been received by other persons," the detective muttered. "The handwriting is wonderfully like the handwriting of old Greenbags, who re-mailed to this street and number the enclosures that plainly indicate the source from which came the suddenly-acquired competency. He dared all the dangers of discovery so far as the superscription was concerned. Further he could not venture without infringing on the limits of discretion."

The Madam was too shrewd to let a single item of evidence fall into the hands of any boarder. Her cabinet desk was fitted with the finest Yale tumbler locks. The detective was placed in an embarrassing position. He could not arouse the faintest trace of suspicion in this woman, who had so cleverly trapped him in his first detective work. He was not ready to reach a criminal climax, because he was anxious to trail her accomplices and ascertain the whereabouts of Madge. If he proceeded too fast, the game would be flushed, the birds would scatter, and the toil of the year be a derision at the agency.

With his usual dreamy appearance he went at once to the lawyer's office and found a placard on the door: "This suit of rooms to rent on reasonable terms." "I suspected as much," he said,



as he placed his hand on the knob. The door was not locked; he passed through the hall into the first room where the odor of leather-bound law books permeated the atmosphere.

"Old Greenbags has moved recently," soliloquized Thompson. "The musty smell of legal lore still lingers to make intuition a certainty. This unlawful money has come to them within the limits of a month. I trust that I shall find in this pile of trash some evidence that will connect the Madam with this unprincipled shark whose time is always wealth."

With deliberation he drew to his side an empty box, stretched out his legs to their full length, as he seated himself, and with methodical patience matched the scattered bits of paper.

"The old sinner!" he exclaimed with some warmth. "I have matched these five pieces of paper and discover parts of an address. That may be useful to the case in hand." With an experience that years of practice had matured he notched the strips and deposited the result in his pocketbook.

"There is no mention made of the Madam. This astonishes me. I thought I would glean something from this pile of debris; the letters were too valuable to destroy."



## CHAPTER IX.

### SHADOWS THE MERCHANT.

He did not return to the boarding house but passed in an opposite direction to the office of ———. It was three, sharp. Claud had just entered and was seated at the elbow of the senior partner, whose mind at that particular time was intent upon the letter he was writing.

“How do you do, Claud; excuse my abruptness. I was very busy with some correspondence that should go by the five o'clock mail. How can I serve you?”

“I called to see you about Harry. The poor boy has been in prison for more than one year. You must do something to get him out on bail.”

“Must, did you say; must! A very harsh word to use when you wish to ask for a favor, Claud. Harry has been in my employ for a number of years. A more faithful clerk I never employed. He ran with a fast set and it proved to be his ruin. Am I my brother's keeper?”

“In one sense of the expression you are your brother's keeper. It will cost you nothing to go



on Harry's bond. You know him well enough to feel that you are running no risk. At the same time your former accountant will enjoy the liberty that your generosity vouchsafes."

"I cannot and will not go on his bond. You confounded lawyers are always hatching some mischief; let the law take its course."

"Mr. ———, I say that you will go on this bond. You must know that my friend never committed that murder."

"Claud, you use the word must again. It has a very unpleasant flavor for me. You must never come to my house again. You see I can use the word also, and in a way that means something."

"Mr. ———, you know that Harry never murdered that stranger. I dare you to deny the charge. If you refuse my request you will take the consequences. You turn pale; guilt speaks in every look and action."

The young lawyer did not notice the foreign-looking gentleman that was examining the specimens of American advertising. Real works of art they were that adorned the frescoed walls of this firm. The stinging words of the senior member of the firm angered the attorney, consequently he spoke with more bitterness than he intended.

"What do you say, Mr. ———," Claud anxiously asked; "what do you say? Think well before you decline."



The business man's manner changed to a sullenness that neither admitted guilt or denied it. He felt that this young man had either bluffed him, or had in his possession evidence that would be damaging. "How much will the bond be, Claud?"

"About ten thousand dollars. The offence is not reallyailable. Through the influence of the Judge, who is a personal friend of yours, the act can be set aside. I am not unreasonable. Harry has been shamefully treated. It is an act of simple justice that is due to him."

"A pretty stiff amount, young man; give me time to think of it. You came so suddenly upon me that you startled me. Come, to-morrow, at five p. m. Do not speak to anyone in regard to this affair. Forgive my rudeness and call as you have called before; you will be welcome."

When Claud quitted the office he did not know that Mr. Thompson was at his heels just like a patient dog. The ugly scowl of one of the owners of the Jonna did not escape the vigilant eyes of the detective. "I have gotten this young limb of the law into trouble and Thompson is the one to get him out." Wherever Claud went Thompson was close behind him, yet this shadowing was so skillfully executed that the young man whistled an opera air as he went in the direction of ———



street, and entered the spacious grounds of the before-mentioned merchant prince.

Winter was melting into spring. Blanche was sitting alone on one of the rustic seats. The lightness of her spring attire attracted the attention of the visitor. Without making his presence known at the house he seated himself by the side of the maiden.

"Good evening, Claud; I am glad that you have come. I hold a letter in my hand from Harry. He pleads with me to use my influence with father. I have done so a hundred times and I have been refused just as many times. Father has changed since that awful night that has made us all so unhappy. He cannot bear to hear Harry's name mentioned in his presence; what can I do?"

"You are an angel, Blanche. If you loved me as much as you love Harry I would be the happiest man in the world. I have been thinking the matter over. You know Judge ———; you are a favorite of his. I believe if you went to him and plead earnestly that he would waive the bond for appearance at court."

"I will have father with me. Claud, why did you not think of this before now? I will speak to him this very night."

"There you go, Blanche; you will spoil my best efforts. I called on your parent, this after-



noon. He was unwilling to do anything for the prisoner, so do not speak of the matter until we see what has been accomplished." He could not impart to her his horrible suspicions and add sorrow to sorrow. He could not tell her what the detective had surmised. "Will you promise me, Blanche? That is a good girl."

"Blanche, promise me that you will not go to the prison to see Harry so much. If your father knew as much as I know he would send you away. The scandal-mongers will be busy with your good name."

"You are jealous, Claud. What do I care for what the world says? So long as he is in prison just so long will I go to see him, whether father likes it or not."

"Bravely spoken! I wish your father had half of the sterling qualities that you possess. Then Harry would never be where he is. Don't tell your papa that I have been here."

"Why do you ask such a question? Are you afraid to speak out? You have acted so strangely, this evening, Claud."

Claud noticed that his companion was observing him with the closest scrutiny. There was something in the puzzled expression that was pathetic. For the first time a dim shadow of a suspicion that haunted her for days came like a ghost to trouble her thoughts. Fully ten min-



utes passed. The brave girl was making some mental resolution that she did not disclose. With a vague good-night she abruptly walked to the house and left the young lawyer to meditate upon the strangeness of Blanche's movements.

"I feel like kicking myself," the only occupant of the grounds remarked. "I have made a pretty mess of this business. How these troubles grow. You scare up one and a hundred come trooping to the hustings. Harry loves the mad girl, and Blanche loves Harry, and I love Blanche, and the Devil is to play generally. I will go home and soak my head; perhaps it will be clearer in the morning."

He arose from his seat and moved lingeringly to the iron gateway. The massive posts were gloomy and tall. A slight blow from some blunt instrument dazed him for an instant. When his senses returned a vague recollection brought to his mind the onrush of a dark figure, a stroke that was parried, the quick retreat of assailant and rescuer. "What does it all mean? My head needs soaking, surely enough. I wonder who came to my assistance? It must have been Thompson, for no one else would have cared whether I was killed or not."

The detective that had been shadowing Claud never for one moment lost the devious windings of the wounded man. As he sought



the rooms that were paid for by Harry, a feeling of profound sympathy for the young lawyer made the tie between them doubly binding. Here is this unselfish soul struggling with a hopeless love, indirectly accusing the father of the girl of wrongdoing, and thereby antagonizing the only person in the world that could be of service in such an emergency. I will run down and see the brave lad in the morning. I am sure he is not badly injured.

"My conjectures were right. The assassin that tried to kill Claud was the detective that betrayed me. He did not take the trouble to conceal the features of his ugly face. That was a terrible blow that this would-be murderer tried to deal to the unsuspecting victim. My arm is black and blue where the blow glanced. If the stroke had been direct, it would have broken my arm."

"Claud is safely housed. I will betake my tired body to the Madam's. It is not midnight by my time-piece," Thompson whispered. "The Madam taught me a wholesome lesson that I will not forget very soon. Fortunately she is so much absorbed with her frivolous amusements that she never gives me so much as a passing glance. She has not returned; the night latch key is here where she always hides it. She is coming now; I hear the roll of carriage wheels on the street; they are two squares away. I will



pass to the other side of the thoroughfare where I will be in the shadow of the tall building."

The coachman climbed down from his tall seat and opened the door for the handsomely-attired woman to alight. The gentleman that escorted her did not assist her in any manner, but sat straight up in his seat out of the glare of the electric light. A slight wave of the hand from Madam V——— was acknowledged by a nod of her attendant. It was at this time that the detective caught a glimpse of the carefully-guarded features. It was the counterpart of Harry's face; the same one he saw at the oyster parlor, more than a year ago.

"Tim has been banished from my landlady's service. I wonder what he has been doing for himself all of these months? There was no number on the turnout; for this reason the privilege tax has not been paid. Plenty of work for you, Thompson; plenty of work."

When the detective turned the key in his lock he drew from his pocket the now famous book whose jottings were invaluable. He wrote a graphic description of the coachman, the style of the horses, the trappings and other minutia that would have escaped the attention of the passer-by.

He did not wait for his breakfast but hastened to the bedside of Claud, who was snoring in a



very healthy way. "The boy is all right; a bruise or two that a little liniment will heal. He must push this matter of the appearance bond to the utmost limit. I want to see Harry back in his old place. He is going to be obstinate as a mule. Claud's necessity will oblige Harry to accept the position. By these means I will get a clearer insight into the business of the firm."

"Hello, Claud! Have you been sparring for the light-weight championship? What have you been doing with yourself since I saw you? Laying down the law to Moneybags, yesterday afternoon?"

"Was that innocent-looking, half-sleepy foreigner that was examining the walls so carefully really yourself?"

"A detective in his day plays many parts. Thus far I have been fortunate in escaping the argus eyes of villainy. The play is on the boards, and will be until all of this high-handed robbery is punished. I depend upon you, Claud; if we are successful name your fee and it will be quickly paid."

"Pay, did you say pay, Mr. Thompson? No money can buy my friendship. I am sure you have a better opinion of me than that. It is true that I am financially in a strait. Times will improve with me. You know the old saying:



‘A long lane that has no turn.’ How did I get such a knock on my head?”

“I will tell you, Claud. A hired assassin did the dirty work. Your suspicions are confirmed. I guarded your footsteps when you quitted the office of ———. It ran in my mind that you would be waylaid; you know the remainder. Go to Mr. ——— and give him to understand that he is the perpetrator of the deed.”

At five o'clock, the attorney presented his card to the senior member of the firm and was admitted to the private office of the merchant prince. This move disconcerted Claud. The presence of the detective strengthened his will power. “A gentleman from the West,” was officially announced. Claud gazed curiously at the fussy, little old man who was dressed in a drab suit and had a queer habit of adjusting his eyeglasses.

“Don't stir, gentlemen. I arrived from the West, to-day, to buy goods. I can call again on the morrow. Ah! here is the morning paper. I beg that you will not let me interrupt your conversation.”

The senior partner turned a shade paler as he noticed the scar on the brow of Claud. “Lost your footing; I see you met with an accident.”

“Mr. ———, I was felled to the earth at your gate. Strange is it not? Someone in the vicin-



ity ran to the rescue and broke the force of the blow. Are you ready to make the bond? I have it here drawn up in legal form."

"I will tell you what I will do for Harry. If Mr. ———, who has an office in the ——— Hall, will sign it with me it's a go; otherwise I will not take such a risk."

"You sign, then he will be sure to add his name also to the instrument. If I take it to him as it is, he will send me back to you. You have taken worse risks than this; it will make you sleep better to know that Harry is out on bail."

"Who is your friend at the ——— Hall? Has he the commercial standing? A first-class bond is what we want. Then the judge will not refuse the pleading." Claud made a note of the address given him by Mr. ———, and tilted his chair backwards in a comfortable position. He scanned closely the careworn face that plainly indicated mental trouble. The restless eyes moved with quick precision from line to line. The instrument was faultlessly drawn up. With a weary sigh he remarked: "You lawyers are a troublesome set of fellows. You live by the misfortunes of others. I suppose that I must sign here to get rid of you."

"In this case, Mr. ———, you are only doing a simple act of justice. Your daughter, Blanche, will be more than pleased, as you must know she



is devoted to Harry. His liberty will make them dear good friends."

"Nothing more than friends is all Harry can expect. Girls must have a romantic turn or two before they settle down to the realities of living. It will wear out with the nursing. I will disown her; she shall be no child of mine if she disobeys my commands."

"Your commands! Why should you condemn an innocent man for shielding a crime? All of the scoundrels are not in the clutches of the law. Some wear purple and fine linen and carry with them the mock sanctity of honesty."

The merchant looked hard at the lawyer. A great oath came to the lips of the rich man as he glared at Claud in a very uncomfortable way. The curses were never articulated; some prudence softened the intention, for he slowly said: "I do not know what your moralizing means. You should have been a preacher instead of an attorney. You have missed your calling. Here is your bond, now be off with you. I have been wasting my time with you and this obliging gentleman has been waiting for an hour. Why, he has gone; I declare, I never saw him go out of this office." Both stared at the vacant seat. Claud was surprised at the suddenness of Thompson's departure. The mystery was explained when he, the lawyer, walked into the office of the



city official and observed the detective examining some tax lists.

"What can I do for you, sir?" came from behind a tall desk. "Ah, is it you? Glad to see you, glad to see you. How can I serve you, my young friend?"

"Perhaps you will not be so glad to see me when you know what business brings me here."

"Nothing unreasonable, I hope. I am glad you are here. I was going to hunt you up myself, for the reason that I will explain later. As I said before, anything in reason, Claud."

"I want you to help me by signing this bond that I have drawn up. My friend, Harry Montet, has been in prison a year; the authorities have postponed the trial from docket to docket; it is a shame that such is the case. We will get him out on bail."

"A year is a small matter. I should think the prisoner who is to be tried for his life would be the last person to object. To tell you the truth, I heard Mr. —— say that they were going to enter a *nolle prosequi* in the case. In such an event, there would be no necessity for giving bond for his appearance."

"And leave the disgrace to follow him through life?" Claud sneered. "I am sure they do not know Harry. He is innocent and he knows it; he will demand a speedy trial. How Mr. ——



has changed. I am just from his office; you see his signature here. I am willing that the wronged man should be out on bail. Never will I consent to a *nolle prosequi*."

"If he is acquitted his good name will be tarnished. The world will pull an honest name down; but you never hear of the world helping to restore to the victim that which he has lost."

"Whose fault is it that such is the case? Public opinion, you will say, and those who mould it; but what is the use of moralizing. When did you see Mr. ———? I am curious to know why he has made such a flop."

"He has his own reasons; you ask him, for I will never tell you."

"How much does the bond call for?" He took the bond in his hand. "Ten thousand dollars. You must be crazy, Claud; I am not willing to sign for such an amount."

A second thought came to the official. "Claud, you have a pull in your ward; if you will use your influence for my re-election I will sign. There is small risk if Harry has not changed."

"I did not know you knew Harry," Claud exclaimed in surprise.

"I have played billiards with him, I have touched glasses with him, I have eaten oyster stews with him at Madam's establishment. I



am sorry for the young man; for this reason I will sign the bond."

"Are you sure that it was Harry?" Claud queried.

"As sure as I can be of anything."

"Do you know that Harry was never in the Madam's establishment in his life, to my knowledge? I ought to know, for we have been friends for five years. He has often given me a lift when I needed it most. If I can clear him it will be the proudest day of my life."

"Then some one is cleverly personating your friend. Here is your bond. I declare, young man, you have completely upset my nerves. Come, let us take a drink; I feel wretchedly about this affair."

Thompson followed closely on the footsteps of the lawyer who mounted the steps leading up to the rendezvous. When the door was closed the two men sat long in the twilight. The cheerful blaze flickered on the papered walls and lighted up two faces with different views of the situation.

"Claud, we must find out who this mysterious personage is that runs only at night. He had nothing to do with the murder; I am sure of this. Harry was standing over the dead man. It is this stranger that has given Harry such a bad reputation. He did not tell Claud of the chance meeting, or of his desire to get the young man's



address, or tell of the man in the stylish turnout who escorted Madam V—— home, or the puzzling connection of Harry with his landlady. It is better to keep these things from Claud; he is impulsive, too impulsive for me.

“I am sorry you said what you did about Harry and his absence from the Madam’s establishment. You let a bird go that time. You should have waited until the case came up in court. What a telling blow you would have delivered by producing this evidence.”

“Thompson, you are right; I am a confounded ass.”

“You know what their line of action will be? They will dismiss the suit and your chance, the chance of your life, will slip through your fingers. I am building up evidence worth two of that, but I cannot trust you after such a break.”

“What do you think of my plan to secure bail, Mr. Thompson?”

“Not worth a copper cent, Claud. The judge will tell you that it is not aailable offence, unless the bondsmen go themselves and use their influence. Take the girl along; I mean Blanche. It will place the judge in a better position. I am sure he will not refuse her gentle pleading.”

“Suppose that Blanche should refuse to do this act of kindness for Harry, what then? You will believe me when I tell you that her father



would send her to Europe, or to some other out-of-the-way place, that would remove her from the influence that is making her prematurely aged."

"In any event, you will have trouble. I merely pointed out the speediest solution of the difficulty. Your bond is valueless for such a purpose. She has been to see Harry in prison alone a number of times, so you tell me. Make the attempt and my word for it she will be more than willing to plead with the judge."

"Against her parent's orders?" Claud rejoined. "He does not know that she is visiting the jail. If I go prowling around the old gentleman's residence for the purpose of meeting Blanche, he will be glad enough to shoot me for a burglar; he has not much love for me anyway."

"I will go with you, Claud. Between us we should have sense enough to communicate with the young lady. We dare not write a note; we do not want any such tell-tale evidence to pass into the hands of our bitter enemies."

"Meet me to-morrow night, at eight o'clock, here. We will go by different streets to the place where your destiny and mine have an abiding home. I am particularly anxious to get Harry out of that hole. Then I will be able to take up another line of my work."

The following night the lawyer and the detective went their devious ways that converged



at the iron gate where Claud received such a blow on the head. Thompson stepped from the shadow of the nearest tree and whispered: "the coast is clear; no one is in the park. Move cautiously up to the side window and throw this small gravel at the French plate glass. I saw her moving about. The father is on the other side of the hall. I will keep an eye on his movements." The noise of the pebble attracted Blanche's attention. She hastily threw a wrap over her head and shoulders and joined Claud in the arbor.

"What have you to tell; no bad news I hope, Claud; is Harry sick?"

"He will be if he remains in prison another month. You have the chance to do him a good turn that he will not forget very soon. I have planned an interview for you that will not be unmaidenly, nor cast one breath of suspicion on your good name. It is in Harry's cause; a noble cause it is."

"What is the nature of this service?" the girl eagerly inquired.

"At half past three, to-morrow afternoon, go to Judge C——'s office. I make the hour at half past three because you will be more likely to see the gentleman alone. Plead with him for Harry's release from prison. I have the appearance bond signed; here it is. He will understand the nature of your appeal at once. For tender



mercy's sake do not say anything to your father about going to the lawyer's office, neither tell him of this bond."

"What must I say to him, Claud?"

"Just what your love for Harry will dictate. Then you will be together and you can arouse the boy who is grieving his life away." What a pang of pain made the young lawyer's face droop lower to hide in the shadows the traces of disappointment that brooded in his heart.

"I will do it; on my soul I will do it. Something tells me that my father has wronged him in some way, because papa is not the same man since Harry quitted his employ. He cannot bear for me to even speak of him in his presence. Something impels me to do this favor, for justice must be satisfied through me."

"What a strange expression, Blanche. If you can persuade the Judge to set him free we will all be happier, eh? Is it not so? Then your papa will restore him to his old position. Would you be ashamed to be seen in his company? You know what a heartless creature the world is. His friends will be few enough, never fear."

"I will only be too proud and happy to show how little I care for the world's cruel censure. I will go in, Claud. The atmosphere has chilled me through and through; feel my hands."

"Blanche, would that I could hold them thus



forever. Harry is the luckiest boy in the world to possess such a grand, faithful love." He could not tell her of Harry's affection for the poor, mad girl; no, no; why should he hurt her heart and thus do injustice to his friend? It would come soon enough.

With a gentle good night they parted. Claud rejoined the detective at the gate. There was a smile on Thompson's face as the lawyer approached. "Did I not tell you that the young lady would gladly help us to give Harry his freedom?"

"Where is the appearance bond, my young friend? It will be safer with me; you are careless, Claud."

"I gave it to Blanche and gave her positive instructions to give it to no one. Did I do wrong?"

"I am sorry that you did not retain it. Suppose that she should be confronted when she returns to the house and her father should see the paper in her hand; all of your persuasion would amount to nothing."

"I will swear I have not a grain of sense," Claud gasped. "I will go back and ask her to return the paper."

"Not on your life. Don't you see the private watchman moving on the other side of the iron railing? We were exceedingly fortunate to es-



cape without detection. We will get away from here as fast as our legs can move us. You go one way and I will go the other way."

"Stay, one word more," whispered the lawyer. "I will go with Blanche; then there will be no failure. The Judge will issue the order of the court. Once in my possession I will fly to Harry's relief and we will have him with us, to-night. Have the rooms looking cheerful."

"I will do even better than that," Thompson stammered. "I will order a first-class dinner, to be served in the rooms; we three will be the jolliest fellows alive."

"Providing always that the Judge issues the order."

"I have no fears on this score, Claud. The Judge has already made up his mind. The guilty persons feel that the ground upon which they stand is slipping from under them. But I do not want Harry to give in an inch. It would look like begging the question. The Judge will only be too glad to grant her petition. I have sworn that a great injustice shall be righted, and by the living God it shall be righted."



## CHAPTER X.

### HARRY'S RELEASE.

The following day Claud waited at the Central Park gate for Blanche. He watched the stream of humanity that passed by him in the eager rush for gold and mammon. The future was the goal, the past had left its sting, and the present was a car to crush beneath its grinding wheels the hopes of yesterday.

A closely-veiled lady approached and in a low tone of voice said: "Claud, have you waited long for me?"

"Not very long," Claud replied. "Is it not a blessed thing that mind is the exclusive property of self, otherwise what a strange world this would be—what a judgment life would be on life; individuality would be a nonentity."

"Come on; this is no place to moralize when so much is to be done. You can tell me of this freak, later; it will keep."

"I am sure of it, Blanche." Then he mentally relapsed into his train of thought. "I am glad that this poor girl at my side has no such



power. She has one of those high-strung natures that cannot stand the double-sidedness of human nature. It is well her father's thoughts never stray beyond the thin walls of bone."

"What are you dreaming about, Claud? We have passed the Judge's office. It must be two blocks back, if I remember correctly. Wake up and keep your wits about you."

The couple retraced their steps and mounted the iron stairway that led to the office they were looking for. The Judge was unusually polite as he arose with alacrity and placed seats for the visitors.

"What can I do for you, young man, and what can I do for you, young woman? Do you wish me to perform the matrimonial rites in a legal sense?"

"O, Judge," the girl replied, "we are here for the purpose of expediting Harry's release from prison."

"Who is Harry? and what has he been doing? So much comes up in a judicial way that it taxes my memory to remember just what you mean."

While his Honor was explaining his position, Claud was eyeing him with a steadfastness that must have been noticed. Fortunately, his face was turned to Blanche. "Thompson is a wonderful man. How he finds all these things out



is beyond my comprehension. The very papers in the case are before him now. I have handled them enough to know them when I see them. He will pose as a benefactor, and make Blanche believe that it is entirely on her account that he is extending the limits of the law in Harry's case."

"Claud, why do you not say something? You can explain what we want so much better than I can."

"You have said all that can be said, Blanche; what can I say more? The Judge remembers the case that has been continued for three terms of the court. The prisoner has been incarcerated for more than a year. We come, Judge, to plead his case. It must appeal to your sense of justice and magnanimity. He should have a trial, or he should be released on a first-class bond."

"Yes! yes! I recall the circumstances very clearly. A terrible murder! An aggravated case! Mistress in a mad house! There, there, Miss Blanche; I am sorry that you feel so badly about it. You know in the law we must call a spade a spade."

Claud cursed the Judge in his heart because he had kept from Blanche the details of the report. He did not inform her that Harry was accused by the papers of having a mistress. He knew how false the report was because Harry had not seen his playmate since she was a child.



That she should be his mistress was a horrible thought—a thought that would make Blanche a misanthrope. My loyalty to Harry shall never cause me to take advantage of the slander, to further my own ends.

“Claud, come, we will go. I do not feel so well. There is a heaviness here that almost takes my breath; give me a glass of water, please.”

“Blanche, I thought you knew Harry better than you do. There is not one word of truth in this base lie. The girl was his schoolmate, and came to the city to seek employment. She did not know his address. He never met her until that terrible night.”

The Judge interrupted him by stating “that the facts in the case were against Harry because competent witnesses saw them together at that time.”

“Blanche, do not mind the Judge; he has been on the bench so long that his finer senses of humanity have been blunted. I am glad that I adopted the civil side of law. Grinding out justice day after day gives to those who have anything to do with criminal practice a bias that often militates against the teachings of mercy.”

“You are right, Claud,” the Judge exclaimed; “quite right, my boy. I honor you for speaking out as you have done. Harry shall go free.



Some evidence has come to light that places a very different status on the case. I have about made up my mind to enter a nolle prosequi and this will end the trouble."

"Judge," the young lawyer solemnly replied, "will this order of the court give him back his good name? Do not do this; let him have his trial and you will at least do him the justice to let the country know it through the papers."

"Ah! Claud, you will lose the chance of winning your spurs. That is what is troubling you." The Judge laughed as he said this and waited for his appellant to reply.

"You mistake, Judge. I do not care a copper for the legal spurs. All I want in this matter is justice for Harry. Write out an order and have it vised by the clerk of the court. I will take it to the clerk myself; by dark we will have the prisoner out on bail."

The Judge read the bond for appearance in a critical manner. "This document has been carefully drawn up; all of the legal technicalities have been inserted." When his glances rested upon the signers of the paper, a look of surprise settled upon the rugged features. He could not deceive the keen eyes of the young lawyer who made only the simple remark:

"You see what a good bond I have furnished. You cannot refuse me this request on Blanche's



account; you are a friend of her father and have known my companion since she was a little girl."

"Very well! Here is the order that you can show to my clerk. He will make the document legally correct. Bless my soul, the sun is almost down and all of this work to do. A good day to you, Miss Blanche." He dismissed Claud with a formal nod; somehow he felt that the young lawyer had outwitted him and made him appear small before the lady. The dignity of his ermine was ruffled, as he muttered: "my friends do not know their own minds. It is by their request that I am going to dismiss the suit, and on top of this they furnish an appearance bond. Well! well! The election is almost here. I will need them to further my plans; let it go."

When Blanche and Claud were well out of the Judge's sanctum they pressed each other's hands in a sympathetic way that was more eloquent than words. "Not too long, Claud; you hurt my hand. These rings have made deep indentations, as you can see. Ah! but you did plead nobly for our friend in misfortune. You are the salt of the earth, Claud; bring Harry to the house; what a happy night we will spend."

"You forget that your father is a bitter enemy of both. It would make the situation anything but pleasant for all concerned."



"How am I to meet Harry, then, if he cannot come to the house?"

"Ah! Blanche, how can I tell you what is best to be done? You and my chum must settle it in your own way. Here you are within three squares of home. I must leave you and hurry to the court-house. Not a word of this to your father."

As he passed from sight he sighed deeply: "Poor Blanche! Harry has never deceived her, and yet she fondly believes that he loves her. I do not see how he can help transferring his affection to the girl that is as true as steel. If the mad girl is really mad so much the better for Blanche."

The work of making the document legally perfect was accomplished without any unnecessary delay. A feeling of pride and exultation filled the breast of Claud, as he showed his authority, and with his own hands struck off the irons that bound Harry's ankles and wrists, and hurried him along the gloomy corridors to the entrance, where a carriage was waiting to convey him to the comforts of his own apartments. What a handshaking there was as the three friends gathered around the table that was spread with tempting dishes. The wine went merrily around. Thompson noted the frank and manly statements that the wronged man made, when he was mellow. These admis-



sions would pave the way for a fuller explanation.

Thompson graphically narrated the adventures that were filled with hair-breadth escapes, and thus changed Harry's opinion very materially. "You know, Thompson, it was by your request that I entered that house. What happened there will never be told by me. It is too awful. I have followed your instructions to the letter. See where they have brought me; a ruined name, a blasted reputation, and an isolation from my fellow-man that will haunt me."

"You remember, Harry, that it was your choice. You look upon the matter too seriously. What is public opinion at best? It is a child of the devil, born without any human charity, relentless without reason, and pharisaical to the last degree. What matters it if the heart be pure? In the other and better life, deeds, not motives, are the coins of virtue."

"Thompson, tell me do you know where Madge is? Did the papers state the information correctly?"

"I cannot tell you because I do not know. Madam V—— is the only one that can give us the information. Even the police are in the dark."

"You must, for my sake as well as your own, go back to work for the firm. You should show no mercy because none was shown to you. There



is some very important information in that vault that I should like to possess, and you are the one to work it up for me; will you do it?"

"How do you know that they will give me my old position? I can see no reason why they should."

"By to-morrow or the day after that you will receive a proposition from them. Don't let any squeamishness about Blanche stand in the way. Such quixotic notions are stale in these rushing times, where the weakest goes to the wall. Your employers would stand by and see you hanged without a twinge of remorse. I am sure that Blanche already feels that her father has wronged you. The game is in your own hands."

"Mr. Thompson, tell me how did you know that the Judge was going to issue the order? Sure enough, the papers were under his paper-weight. He made a great to do about the matter. For appearance sake he kept us on the tender hooks of expectation."

"For the same reason he will give Harry back his place, and be 'sweet on him,' as the society girls express it. Here is poor Claud that has almost given up his practice on your account. He has nothing in the world to live upon, not to speak of myself. You can recoup us in a substantial way that will be more than appreciated."

"I will accept if the position is offered to me.



It will give me something to do ; anything to keep my mind occupied. I must not think of the past ; it is too gloomy."

The fire was low when the detective withdrew. He wrapped his greatcoat closer around him and hurried forward to his boarding house. With caution he inserted his night latch key and ascended the carpeted stairway to his room. He lighted the gas and at once discovered that some curious hand had touched the plates of his microscope. Other articles had been overhauled and replaced, but not in the same order of their previous arrangement.

"She knows of Harry's release, I am sure of it. To-night is the first time she has been in my room since my arrival. I fear that woman, for I suspect that she really guesses that I am not what I seem to be. It is well that my beard is genuine."

The landlady was in her usual place at the head of the table. She was a business woman and ran a boarding house on strictly business principles. She did not gauge her guests' appetites by the amount that they could eat, but by the amount of food they should eat ; the milk glasses were modest as to their capacity ; the sugar was granulated because its dryness and sand-like qualities made the major quantity sift back into the bowl ; the spoons were dainty in their size ; the bis-



cuits were regulated by the size of a silver dollar; scientific economy in every department was the distinguishing feature of the Madam's management.

She paid more attention to his wants. The slices of bread were thicker, the juiciest parts of the steak found their way to his place at the table. This attention annoyed him because the other boarders cast inquiring glances towards his dishes, and either grumbled or exchanged knowing winks which clearly indicated that the Madam was nursing him for some especial reason which was yet to be developed. The detective had been in the house for several months. So unobtrusive were his movements that the largest number of regulars did not know that such a boarder was in the establishment.

She took great pains to introduce him to every knight of the oblong table. The sallies of wit that passed around the table, directed and meant for him, irritated this silent man whose capacity for absorbing items was immense. His rejoinders were fashioned so skillfully that he turned the laugh on the Madam, at the same time he was gaining an insight into her nightly outings—an insight that was peculiarly advantageous, because all the gain was his and all the loss was hers. The places she frequented were all quietly booked for future reference; thus an insight into her



reputation was gained by the exchange of a few silly jokes.

“Who would have thought such a meek-looking professor could be so wonderfully charming? Everyone at the table is asking who you are, and where you came from. I was ashamed to tell them that I did not know. Beg pardon, but did I see your references; did I even ask you for them? I have forgotten you came at a time when I was absent a greater part of the day. You may be an anarchist for all that I know. I don't like your foreign appearance one bit. Is your beard securely fastened?” Suiting the action to the words she gave his whiskers a savage jerk that brought the tears to his eyes.

A flush of anger suffused his face. His naturally bushy eyebrows met at an angle just over the bridge of his nose. A savage glare at the Madam made her feel at once that she had gone too far.

“Oh! sir, pardon me; I did not mean to be so rude. I had a slick-tongued detective here once. I do not know why he should have singled out this house. I presume he was on the still hunt of some of my guests. Anyway, it made me feel uncomfortable all of the time.”

“What became of him? Did he escape with his life? After such rough treatment I fear the worst.” The question came so suddenly that it threw her off of her guard for an instant, and she stammered



some lame excuse that was unintelligible, and scrutinized his appearance so closely that it required all of his nerve to withstand the rigid inspection. "Are you satisfied?" he drawled. "I do not understand your American methods. Is it customary to treat guests in such a rude manner? I declare I never was so badly treated in my life."

"I owe you an apology, sir, for my rudeness. Really, I must have been crazy, when I imagined that such a harmless creature as yourself could be a detective, or even an anarchist."

"You have paid me the greatest compliment of my life," the professor lisped. He perceived that her suspicions were again aroused and continued: "I do not understand the exact meaning of your language. A detective is a very bad man, and an anarchist is bad too; so if I have not sense enough to be bad, I must be good." She did not probe the mental self-congratulation that made him feel secure in his perfect disguise. "It is a compliment, indeed, if I can lose my identity and deceive this shrewd woman who is responsible for all of the misfortunes that have made us all so unhappy."

She laughed outright at this foreigner's explanation, and added, "how is it that you turned the tables on me at dinner time so cleverly? You



must study our idioms ; then you will not be placed in such a peculiar position."

The Madam turned on her heel and left the meek-looking man standing at the foot of the main stairway. Every time she turned around he was staring at her in the same stupid way. "The old fool," she muttered. "The old fool," he answered back, as he mounted the steps to his room, where he amused himself with some rare specimens that he had mounted on plates that suited the stage of his microscope.

While he was slowly focusing the fine adjustment, turning the large milled head lever forward and backward, the fragrance of some delicate perfume made him aware that the Madam was not far away ; either this or she had been overhauling his effects. "Come in," he ventured to remark. The door opened and the solicitude of his life stood by his side. "Curiosity alone prompted me to enter a gentleman's apartments," she softly cooed. "I have heard of that brass instrument when I went to school. I never had a chance to look through one before ; will you gratify my curiosity?"

"I am working upon a very dry subject," he remarked. "Take a peep through the tube, and tell me what you see."

She leaned forward in such a position that her warm breath was on his cheek. He could feel



the rapid beating of her heart as her bosom rested on his shoulder. Right well he knew what that meant; this human vampire was using the gift of beauty that God had given her to debase true manhood.

"Well, what do you see?" he exclaimed, with some irritation; "tell me what you see. The focus is perfect; anything that would induce you to wish to look again?"

"I do not know what I see," she answered; "it is horrid looking—looks like a sore place, or something of the kind."

He watched the expression of her face while he slowly repeated: "that is the gray cell matter of the brain—the brain of a crazy person." He noted the agitation that she could not conceal and continued: "I was studying the changes, or rather the breaking up of the nerve centers, but you are not interested in this kind of work I am sure, unless you had some dear one who was thus afflicted. I believe that I am on the eve of a grand discovery."

"You are a queer man and no mistake. You are right; it does not interest me in the least."

"I am glad to hear you say so, because you will understand how I love to pursue my investigations in peace. I am not sociable in my nature. You are a beautiful woman and belong to society and the world. I hope you use it for the better-



ment of those you wish to ensnare, otherwise you are a danger to be avoided. Do you understand me, Madam?"

"It is a doubtful compliment that you have paid me, sir. I will study over the lessons of earlier years, then, perhaps, I will be able to understand the subject which you have so ably explained."

She said this with a wicked snap that left the detective in doubt as to her real meaning. "I will come to see you often," she remarked. The look that accompanied the promise was broad, even to forwardness. His expressionless face disconcerted the landlady who gave a shrug to her shapely shoulders as she passed out.

"I have the advantage this time. My disguise is perfect. There is a lingering something in my person that makes her suspicious—something of my former self that I must eliminate."

He unscrewed his high power objective and placed the microscope in its case. He patted the package affectionately as he soliloquized: "I shall expect great things from you, later. I must sleep now, then I will be in better condition for the night work that must yield me favorable results. He noticed that the Madam dressed with unusual care, certain evenings in the week; as this is one of her nights out, I shall be on hand to shadow this villainous woman."



He tilted backward in his easy chair, placed his feet on a low-seated stool in front of him and slept until the dinner bell rung. After the meal was served, he noticed that the Madam gave unusual attention to her toilet; her cheeks had a suspicious peachiness that was youthful; in fact she was ten years younger in the evening than she was in the morning. He also noticed that no carriage ever came to the door for her; she always quitted the house without an escort; her elaborate toilet was certainly out of place in a street car.

"I am of the opinion that she walks several blocks and enters a coupe or other conveyance and drives to the appointed place." He knew that she never absented herself from home without giving orders for breakfast. He knew that there was but one exit, and this was in the front of the house. There was a narrow alley that the servants used. He stationed himself over the way in his former position and waited for results.

His landlady closed the front door carefully behind her and peered up and down the street as if she was expecting some one. The inspection was satisfactory. She tripped lightly down the steps with the detective at her heels. He followed her for four squares. Back in the shadow of a tall building a hack was waiting. She was whirled rapidly away. There was no vehicle near the view point.



"I am disappointed," he reflected. "The light was so uncertain that I was unable to distinguish the number. It was no ordinary hack. The family crest on the panel denoted shoddyism. These Americans have a weakness for show and display that is marvelous to a foreigner. How much more they should honor the ancestors whose brawn and muscle hewed out of the depths of vast primeval forests such a splendid civilization."

"What has that to do with this subject? I am losing time standing here moralizing when I should be chaperoning the Madam, not that she needs such a companion, for she is fully able to take care of herself." He did not return to his room but drew from his pocket the aforesaid leather pocketbook and drew therefrom the bits of writing paper that he found in the lawyer's office. "No. 4362, ——— Second street," was what the puzzle had written on it in a legible handwriting; "I will take a peep and see what kind of company she keeps. As she will not return before three in the morning I will have plenty of time to locate her."

He buttoned up to the throat his dark-colored overcoat and pulled the brim of his soft felt hat over his eyes in such a manner that his features were concealed from any prying or meddling glances, and took his seat in the down town car, over in the corner next to the motorman. With



his usual caution he alighted four squares from the house he was to shadow. He made his way by the less frequented streets to the front of the building. The four stories of the building looked gloomy enough as they towered upwards; not a glimmer of light escaped from the closely curtained windows.

"This is a close corporation or nothing at all. I will stand in this dark little alley where I can see the front and rear of the mansion to better advantage? He was shielded from the cool winds that now and then blew the dust along the deserted street in a manner that was annoying. The sound of a hasty footstep came from the farther end of the blind alley. He flattened his body against the brick wall and waited for the person to approach.

"Ah! he has turned in farther up the side street," the detective thought. "This is one point that escaped me. I see a ray of hope in that little beam that is measured by the cubic foot. A good many cubic feet there are, judging by the time it takes for the Madam to reach home. Another club member coming. I hear some who are more bold entering by the front door. I will move to the other side of the block and see who the patrolman is that is on this beat; he should know something of this mysterious house. He cannot be a very close observer. I have been here more



than two hours. I would have known it if he had passed me. Besides, in his opinion, I would be a suspicious character and liable to be arrested as such; or, perhaps, this is some privileged association that is above the law. I do not know that the Madam came to this place."

"Aha! there is the carriage that she came in taking someone home drunk as a lord. He did not last long, or, perhaps, he is sick. The driver is unable to get him into the vehicle; now is my chance."



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DEAD CLUBMAN.

He passed quickly to the other side of the street and walked slowly by this samaritan who was vainly endeavoring to hold the door of the hack open, and also trying to force the half tipsy man, who was as limber as an eel, into the narrow entrance.

"Bear a hand here, will you, stranger?" The driver said this in a guarded tone of voice that was scarcely audible. "Come, be quick about it, my friend, and I will thank you."

"What is the matter with the man? I must first know this. I do not wish to get into the clutches of the law for doing you a good turn; he may have been drugged and robbed."

"Say, man, if you are afraid, go up those steps and ring the bell. No, don't do that either; go around the back way and touch the button; tell someone to come, and lose no time about it."

"How do you get there? I am perfectly willing to help you in that way."



"Go around in that alley and pass down this side until you come to a wooden double door."

"Is it open?" the detective asked.

"Reach your hand through the opening and unbolt the gate and go in. You will find the doors open; go as fast as your feet will carry you."

Mr. Thompson hastened to do that which was a godsend to him. His appearance gave the servants a surprise when he delivered the message. With his keen eyes he posted his memory with the details of the establishment.

"Could you give me a bit of something to eat or the price of a cup of coffee?"

While the waiters hastened to assist the jehu, the detective sat down to the kitchen table and drank a delicious cup of coffee. It took the chill of the night air from his body. The salads that the waiters brought back from the third floor were relished in a way that made the attendants stare. It tickled these trained men to see the stranger stuff the food away beneath his waistcoat, and the stranger was tickled because they were tickled. He did not ask one question, but thanked them and glided into the darkness of the alley. He returned to his domicile well pleased with the night's work.

He did not see the Madam until late the next morning. The engorgement of the eyeballs plainly indicated that she had been drinking too



deeply of the convivial cup. Her excuses were greeted with a wise silence that made such a virtue doubly golden. She was low-spirited and moody. What had happened the night last past had left a deep impression on her sober moments. Nothing seemed to interest her; one moment she laughed immoderately, the next moment her eyes filled with tears.

"I wonder who that man was that the hackman thrust into the carriage? Fool that I was, I should have observed his face. What the connection is between that person and this woman is another hard nut to crack. I am in to the finish or my name is not 'Thompson with a p.'"

He picked up the morning paper. The usual box car letters startled him as he read the headlines: "Mr. Z—— committed suicide." How could he tell that the gentleman that committed suicide and the limber clubman were one and the same person?

The Madam was too much excited to converse with; she seemed to move away from him whenever he approached her. He had the number of the dead man's house; this he secured from the funeral notice. "I must see this face; it will be another link in the chain of evidence. I am sure she will not be there; as the notice is general there is no impropriety in attending."

Another item of information that would be



useful to the detective was to locate the driver that put the stranger into the hack. He, the detective, did not wish to be summoned as a witness because it would ruin all of the labor of the past. He parted his whiskers in the middle and secured them in position by a bit of wax. He used his smoke-colored spectacles for his eyes, and gave to the outer ends of his bushy eyebrows an upward turn that changed the appearance of his expressive face beyond recognition. He took down from its peg a neat suit of black broadcloth. Thus equipped he entered the house of sorrow. The parlors at that early hour were comfortably filled with mourning relatives and friends. His entrance was not marked by any stares of curiosity. With quiet modesty he stood well to the rear where he was secure from remarks and was able to see without being seen.

The Madam was not there, neither was the hackman there. A little feeling of disappointment smote him sharply as he passed on with the mourners and glanced at the white dead face of the clubman, so expressionless and still. He filed out and watched the little groups scatter; some entered the carriages, and some dispersed to their respective homes. He noted each vehicle as it drove up to receive its load. "I am right," the detective soliloquized, "this is the coupe with the narrow door, the family crest on the panel,



the strong springs to the door that made me master of the situation."

The face of the suicide haunted him. How and under what circumstances he had seen the face before was a puzzle to unravel. He expected to look upon the face of the man that so strikingly resembled Harry. There lying in his casket was the man that was supposed to be dead, his throat severed by the knife that was in Harry's hand when the murder was committed.

Mr. Thompson scratched his head with the fourth finger of his right hand, a habit that he had acquired when he was deeply chagrined. "What does it all mean?" he mused. "More work for me, more work for me. I have wealth and influence to contend with. I see this the deeper I go. I must locate the driver of the elegant turnout, must strike while the iron is hot."

The same afternoon the clergyman was adroitly metamorphosed into a sandy-haired, greasy looking hobo. To make the deception more perfect he sought a down-town livery stable that the odors might aid him in procuring a situation as hostler. Thus disguised, he entered by the rear entrance the house of mourning and applied for a position as rubber for the fine animals that were better housed than half of the human race.

The tone of the voice that greeted him as he walked into the stable was not reassuring. The



overbearing insolence of this upstart made his fingers twitch to be at his throat. He composed his nerves and replied to the question: "Sir, I only want the price of a cup of coffee; it's not ivery one that kin be at sumthing these days."

"You are too dirty to touch one of these horses; get out and find something else to do. Have you any references?"

This query was providential because he was particularly anxious to locate Tim, the slick one, that drove Harry out to that ill-fated house on the suburbs. "I can give you me friend Tim, as foine a whip as dhrove a hack. I am sure you moost know him."

"Know him? I should think I did know him; a grander rascal never breathed the breath of life; the police would give a round sum to gather him in."

"Hev ye laid yer peepers an him within the three days?"

"Yes, he still drives a hack for the demi-monde. You will find his stand at the corner of —— street and the alley."

"Sim wan dead in the house? I seed the imblim of mourning at the door. A gintleman, green-backs to burn; he wi'nat nade the price uv a coop of cawfe now, puir man."

"I will be out of a job myself. The house is



to be closed by order of the court, as the firm of —— have a mortgage on the property.”

“Confidintially, now; he ware a hummer. It ware ye thet pushed him in the hack; do ye mind the tramp that ye wanted to help ye whin he ware as limber as an eel?”

A look of consternation came to the man's face. “You don't look like the man that I asked to help me.”

“Ye ware that ixcited that ye na ken eny wan.”

“I had nothing to do with the ——gentleman's death. I thought he was only knocked out. When we got here I found that he was as dead as a herring. He left a note which the coroner's inquest used as evidence. It looked billious for me, but the inquest made it all right.”

“They have the note. One of the jury, a young man, took it away with him. I suppose you will find it at the office of the Chief of Police.”

“Ware thay lad a friend of the dead one?”

“Look here, you dirty vagabond; how is it that you are so interested in this man's death? You are asking too many questions.”

“Nivir ye moind me. It is meesilf that tramps tha countree over. I will be in Chicargo in three days frum this.”



“Well, get out; somehow I fell into your gab so naturally that I told you too much.”

“Ye’ze hev nawthing to creep about; the paper makes it all right and it’s a gude day to ye, sir.”

When Thompson was changing his disguise his astute thoughts were as busy as his fingers. “That young man that has the suicide’s note is the man I am after. It is dollars to doughnuts that the paper is forged. It used to be an easy thing for the Madam to imitate any one’s handwriting when she lived in the village of F——. I must manage to get hold of that piece of paper; also some of the writing of the dead man and compare them. Just how it is to be done I do not know, unless it be through Harry. They must have had some business dealings—some evidence of indebtedness, as the firm held a mortgage on the property. I must also get the secrets of that clubhouse; there will I find the trail of this night-bird.”

Mr. Thompson had not been in his room for two days. He knew that the Madam would look with suspicion on his absence and renew the old grounds of complaint. The warmed-over dishes would again be a *casus belli*. His astonishment was augmented when she playfully remarked:

“I was going to drag the harbor for your body and here you are, sound and well. A large



city is a dangerous place for a meek professor to wander around when his mind is on the horrid sores you showed me through your microscope, and wanted to make me believe that the specimen was some of the brains of a crazy person."

"From the manner in which you acted, three days ago, I thought that I would have the pleasure of studying some of gray cell matter in your brain. I perceive that your condition is normal; I congratulate you."

"Can you tell when a person has fever? You must be a doctor because you have so many vials of medicine on hand. It will save me doctor bills. Somehow I have confidence in your modest bearing." She held out her plump, shapely arm and watched him count the pulse beats. When he had counted sixty she stammered: "Well, what do you say, my doctor?"

"I will say that your system has undergone a terrible wrenching in the past three days; you have some fever yet. It is a different kind of fever—anxiety that depresses the nervous system, gives its own peculiar movement, and a sudden removal of the cause of the anxiety gives the pulse another beat that is not to be mistaken."

"I do not like the way you tell me this. You shall not be my physician any longer. All persons have these spells, as you must know; you



judged more by my outward looks than by my real pulse."

"Then why did you ask me to pass an opinion on the general state of your health? Something happened to mar your happiness, night before last; of course it is not for me to pass in judgment on your stirring life; perhaps some loved one died or you had a quarrel with the man you love." He noted the paleness that hid the warmer tints and continued: "Pardon me, I am intruding on the privacy of your inner self, when it is so foreign to my nature to do so."

"What do you mean by my stirring life, I would like to ask?"

"Is not a boarding-house life a stirring life? If it is not, then am I most woefully mistaken. How did you ever drift into such a drudgery?"

"I cannot live without excitement. It is my very life. In this business one meets all classes of people, coming and going. I meet those I love, and I also meet those I hate; as you see, I am on the go all of the time."

"You are right, love and hate make up the sum of this world's existence. As for myself, I am a philosopher in my way. I never go to extremes; thus my pulse is never irregular. The world owes me a living, and I owe the world a debt that kindness for my fellow-man must cancel."



“What a saint you are, you dear man! I am wicked in my way. I find pleasure in everything that is worldly. I belong to clubs where money is lost and won. I go to the theater and see the plays. A short life and a merry one for me, is my motto. What good is all your knowledge; you have filled your brain with wisdom that will die with you.”

“Time, Madam, will prove to you that learning is foe to ignorance and crime. I do not believe in graveyard somberness.”

The detective said this with a comical seriousness that made the Madam laugh softly in her own peculiar manner. It resembled the purring of a cat, as she whimpered: “Really, now, professor, there is in you the making of a real society man. To return to the subject of insanity, do persons ever get well when once their minds have been wrecked?”

She was thinking of the young girl that sought her protection in the months gone by, yet there was not a single twinge of conscience in the thought. The girl was in her way and stood between her and a colossal fortune. All of the money that she had thus far received was for the maintenance and support of this niece. Little benefit the inmate of an asylum received from moneys so transferred from England. She felt that the professor was eyeing her narrowly.



"My! how busy my mind was with the dreams that have never been realized. Again I ask you, do such persons ever get well?"

"Perhaps; if I could see the patient I might give a more satisfactory answer. I have had a grand experience in the asylums on the continent."

"I did not say that I had such a patient. What led you to believe that such was the case? You ask such queer, direct questions; you make me nervous; do not do it again."

"You were so anxious to be informed; how can I pass on a case when I have never been favored with a chance to see the girl."

"I did not say anything about a girl, but I do not mind telling you that I once had a niece who was slightly demented."

"Mr. Thompson's heart almost stopped beating as he asked in strong, clear voice: "Is the girl alive?" I ask this because I have a preparation that will build up the nervous system; then she will be fortified against a second attack."

"Have you something that will make her worse?"

She has indirectly answered my anxious thoughts. I see it all. She has this poor child in a private asylum. It will be very difficult to locate her. She was too smart to place her in a public institution. If she has placed her in



some retreat and changed her name, this fact will make it more difficult for me to reach the unfortunate child.

"What are you studying about? I saw a look of pain come over your face. Does the fate of the maiden trouble you?"

"It is a terrible misfortune to lose one's mind." He said this slowly, for the thought came to him that he had gone too far with his questionings. This female devil would be on her guard and make it more difficult to trace the Madam's niece. She ended the *tete a tete* by saying: "I do not understand you; you are either a fool or a knave. Here I have been spending the entire afternoon with you, and for what? You are too much of an old stick; you have no get-up about you. I permitted you to feel my pulse and you dropped my arm like it was poison."

"I am not given to transports; it is not in my nature. Perhaps with others you will know what a transport is; so do not waste any of your sweetness on an humble professor like myself."



## CHAPTER XII.

### AT THE CLUB.

With this remark, he turned to his books and was soon poring over the pages with an earnestness that had wisdom in every line. When she was gone, he threw the book upon the bed and waited for the supper that was then upon the tables. This was the Madam's club night. He could not disguise himself as a waiter, because the waiters were in each other's way. His presence and a knowledge of the premises would bring to him a line of action.

The Madam was too busy with her toilet to notice the silent man that hastened to put some finishing touches to his make-up. He arrived early at the back entrance of the club-house and slipped his hand through the small opening. The bolt responded to the pressure and thus he let himself in, where the cooks were busy preparing the luxurious food of these epicures.

Thompson looked and acted like a waiter that had spilled most of the rich gravy on his last year's suit of clothes. Their mirror-like surface was



anything but a recommendation. This was the impression that he wished to make on the minds of these servants. The suit was too good for the tramp act and not good enough for the service of this rich club.

"How did you get in here?" was the first question that was asked the detective. "Come, be off with you; this is no place for you."

"I am the one that helped the groggy gentleman into the hack, last week," the new comer replied; "you promised me a bite to eat. I could make myself useful for the leavings."

"If the members of the club knew that you were here they would raise old sand. Go out there in the coal shed and bring me some coal. The stuff will not be ready for two hours."

One hod of coal, then two, three, four, and five buckets followed in quick succession. The steel range was a friend to the man that furnished the coal. It kept the detective busy and thus averted the suspicious glances that were from time to time cast in his direction.

"Keep up the lick, my lad," the cook exclaimed. "As good a meal as you ever ate shall go under your belt; the big ones up there shall have no better." In a dozen ways the disguised man assisted this master in the art of preparing tempting dishes. He knew by the busy movements of the well trained waiters that the menu was ready



to be served, and from the manner that it was served he judged that the tables were irregularly placed about the apartment for the convenience of the members, who came and went, but did not remain during the evening.

This was a disappointment to the searcher after truth. Perhaps the man he wished most to see would lounge around the clubroom and then go elsewhere. He did not know for certain that this night owl belonged to this association. If such was the case, it conveyed to his (the detective's) mind, evidence that the suspected one had considerable wealth. The appointments and decorations of the establishment were costly in the extreme. Now and then he had a glimpse of the Madam as she sat at one of the tables where the red and white chips were stacked up by the side of each eager player. The distance was so great that he could not name the game, yet he could see the tempters of the fickle goddess.

His landlady was a cool player. The stacks of chips would diminish, and then some lucky turn of the cards would build them up. "There is old Greenbags, the lawyer, just come in. Times must have improved with him since he occupied the dingy little office, with its cobwebs and musty smell. He calls the Madam to one side and reads a letter to her. Something unusual has happen-



ed, for both are excited. They are coming this way as I am a sinner."

As they swept by him towards the back entrance the letter the lawyer had in his hand was blown from him by a gust of wind and carried by the coal shed to the back part of the enclosure. In vain they sought to find it.

"I am sorry for this. That paper must be found, to-morrow. It is as dark as four black cats. It would take sharper eyes than ours to see it in such darkness. I will come myself, to-morrow, I promise you."

Madam F—— was peevish. The attorney had broken up her game when all of the luck was with her. For this reason she purred: "You put all of the dirty work on me; why don't you do some of it yourself? You know where Madge is as well as I do. You are getting all the pay and I am doing the work."

"You gamble all of yours away. What you don't gamble away you give to that trifling scamp."

"Mention his name and I will murder you, you miserable pettifogger," the infuriated woman hissed in his ear; "there may be someone listening to what we say."

They did not see the form of the detective crouched against the dark background of coal, or see the watchful eyes that had located the letter



as it fluttered in whimsical curves here and there, and finally settled in a little patch of stunted grass in the far corner of the lot.

"Tell me what was in the letter? If necessary, we will get a lantern and search until we do find it."

"The lawyers in London have, or are going to issue an order of court. This order will state that your niece must be returned to England. A board of experts will pass upon the mental condition of the maiden. You know what this means; you know that she is as sane as you or I. It means no more money from the other side. They already suspect that something is wrong. Somehow they are too well posted as to what is going on here. That detective that was on our tracks is frozen as stiff as a steel ramrod; were it not for this circumstance I should imagine that he was after us. Pshaw, I know he is dead, for no living thing could stand such a low temperature. A polar bear has eaten him long ago."

"What do you expect me to do, you old sinner? I have already done enough to burn forever in the lake that the good people preach about. This does not trouble my conscience, because, like yourself, I have no conscience. I will do anything to get hold of this vast sum of money."

"You must put the girl out of the way."



"How do you mean; in what manner?"

"You must kill her or get some one in the asylum to give her a heavy dose of laudanum."

"I cannot do this awful deed. I know that I am bad but not bad enough for the terrible work you have mapped out for me."

"You doped that fine man, the other night, that you might win his money; you gave him too big a dose and he is dead. You did not seem to have any compunctions of conscience on this score. You did not lose any sleep because you sold this young girl's innocence for money. Shall I continue?"

"I will do this: place her in a very private asylum, where no one will ever find her. We will give her a fictitious name; then she will be to all intents and purposes dead. You can draw up the papers and have her death sworn to in legal form."

"By these means, then, you would bridge over the law and get hold of the fortune of this young girl. Supposing that in time they should want to see the corpse, what then?"

"By that time there would not be much of the money left. I would buy diamonds galore and skip to Europe—go to Paris where I have a friend; she lives at Rue St. ———. A merry life and a short life for me."

"Where is your husband now? Everyone



thinks you are a widow. How did you ever marry such a ruffian? He was going to cut my throat, just for the fun of the thing."

"He is at the bottom of the sea, I hope. The firm of X—— is keeping him out of the way. The insurance companies paid the immense sum, but they paid it under protest. The standing of the firm precluded the possibility of any fraud. If he is not dead, then he is in London, No. — street, Whitechapel."

"That letter was an order on the asylum to deliver up the girl to the English Consul. The necessary papers will come through the Department of State. You see how important it is to get her out of the way, since your conscience is so susceptible to the pleas of human feeling, and your heart is so tender; ha !! ha !! by Jove, that is good; you must get her out of the way and lose no time about it."

"Madge is high strung like her late father was. She would be glad to eat morphine to drown her sorrows. I will see that she has plenty to take, then her mind will be a blank. I will promise you that they will never find her, hunt as they will."

"Did you cash that latest sterling exchange that I sent over to you by Tim? I have no confidence in him, and he has no confidence in me—a poor partnership to begin business."



"I cashed it and gambled it all away, so the asylum will have to do without the allowance that has been coming regularly from London, the allowance that I have been spending on myself from time to time. There is now owing to the soft-hearted manager of the place two years' indebtedness. I do not care if it is never paid; I have had my fun. This proprietor has taken a deep interest in Madge and classes her among those patients that can be cured, providing she can be aroused from the lethargy that holds her senses in thrall."

"Hell is too good for such a vampire as you are." The lawyer said this as he turned full upon the woman that seemed not to have a soul, a heart, a particle of gentleness; no single trait to indicate that she was human. He continued: "How is this amount to be paid? They will not let the unfortunate girl go without the money due is paid in full. Where do I come in? You must have hypnotized me when you let my natural shrewdness be slaughtered by your promises to pay. What a fool I was! Well, I will make my money out of the firm whose standing is high. Everybody has had a fat slice of this English estate but me. The State Department will be investigating this miserable business; what then? Uncle Sam has a long arm."

"Leave it to me," the woman said; "no one



shall find Madge, and I will hoodwink the soft-hearted doctor and take my niece away right under his nose. Do you think that I am going to let this girl stand in the way of this fortune? Never! on your life. How will the government officials find the place? No one but myself knows where she is."

"You are a fool! The letter has the proper address. We must take another hunt for the mis-sive."

Fate was against them. They lighted matches and sought with diligence for the precious document. The sweepings from the rooms misled them. The lawyer spoke up: "The paper cannot get away; I am sure of this. The high brick wall will prevent the wind from doing any further damage. As a member of the club, I shall have this place thoroughly cleaned. It's a disgrace to the standing of the club."

He gave a quiet chuckle as he made this closing remark, and gave the aforesaid vampire a dig in the ribs with his boney thumb, and added: "Money makes a curtain that poverty cannot peep behind. Hea !! ho !! what a world this is; how good we would all be if every person knew what every other person was doing."

She sighed and whimpered: "It would ruin my business; no millenniums for me."

Their voices were modulated to a whisper as



they made their exit by the alley gate. When they were at a safe distance and their footsteps were echoes from the far side, the detective crawled from the dark little corner of the wood shed and straightened his cramped limbs. The blood circulation was almost nothing. He rubbed his limbs vigorously for ten minutes, and hobbled to the spot where the moist letter was wedged between two tufts of dead grass. He did not fear detection. The suppressed revelry came faintly to his ears. They were too busy with their merriment to heed the tired man that lighted a match and with a rapid glance at the face of the letter muttered:

“God bless this night and the good that it has brought to me. Old Greenbags is right; she is a vampire, clothed with the outward semblance of womanhood. I pray to God that the young girl had the strength and firmness of her race. I feel that she had this and is as pure as the days when she said her little prayer at her mother’s knee. There is a terrible reckoning for some one or my name is not—say Thompson, if you please, or any other name for that matter. How stiff my knee joints are! I must get out of this and lose no time about it. If I should be discovered those who are searching will know that their secret is the property of another. They will skip the country and thus balk all of my plans.”



"I trust that the miserable shyster will not blackmail Blanche's father, at least until I get from Harry the information that I want. I must keep a sharp lookout in this quarter and see that Harry's high sense of honor does not make him a suitor for Blanche's hand. At the same time, I will cast my weather eyes over the chart of his conscience and see how he weathers the nagging gale."

With the precious letter filed away in his come-to-judgment leather pocketbook, he walked home. The exercise took the stiffness from his legs. The brisk pace made his blood circulate more rapidly. When he reached his room he was glad to turn in and enjoy a refreshing sleep. Before he did this he took from his pocket a small burglar alarm and fastened it on to the door jamb and the door. This precaution taken, he slept until the morning sun was shining in his face; no one had attempted to force an entrance.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### AT THE ASYLUM.

He did not see the Madam. He pictured the consternation of the partners in crime who sought in vain for the lost order. They cursed the wind for the misfortune that left them almost helpless. The consoling thought to them was that the wind had blown it over the wall, into some trash heap where it would be burned. It was of no use to any one but the parties interested.

He hurried to the rendezvous and disguised himself as a physician, secured a hack and drove to the gloomy building. He drew on his bank account for more than the amount due—that is to say, for an approximate amount.

“The Vampire is right,” Mr. Thompson thought. “This manager is soft. She could not have selected a more fitting minion. The man is all right, but he has not the power to resist the hypnotic influence of this bold, bad woman.”

The detective was seated in the office of the asylum and awaited the return of the superinten-



dent, who with an officiousness that was ludicrous, inquired as to the nature of his business.

The detective handed the order to the manager and remarked: "I have come for the young girl you have been treating for the year just past. Is there any hope of her recovery?"

"You are a little too late, sir; the patient left here half an hour ago. Deuced glad to get rid of her and get my money. I thought I was a victim of misplaced confidence. The crafty woman that brought her here gave me nothing but promises; you cannot run an asylum on promises. She came with a closed carriage, gave me a check for the amount and took the girl away. She was an interesting patient. Some great shock must have unbalanced her mind. It is not a hopeless case by any means. Here comes my wife; she will tell you more about this patient than I can. I must deposit this check as soon as possible."

"One moment, sir, if you please. Would you let me see the check, for in all probability I will have to return the amount, as it was a kindness on the part of the payer because it was unauthorized."

Mr. Thompson made a note of the face of the check and returned same to the weak-minded physician, who hastened to get it cashed. The manager's wife entered. A pleasant feeling came into his thoughts. "Here is," he said, "a grand



woman that you can count on every time. She has unusual strength of character. I have need for just such a friend later." She approached with a frankness that was charming and soon made him feel perfectly easy, while their conversation naturally drifted to the sweet-mannered patient that was concealed somewhere in the city.

The detective was chagrined at the turn of affairs. A hundred conjectures flitted through his mind. It is best that Madge should suffer for a while; her victory will be more complete. Besides, I would have been compelled to act with promptness and thus scattered the covey that I wish to bring down with one shot. He was debating the propriety of making this woman a confidante when a well-modulated voice quietly interrupted his meditation with:

"Well, sir, pardon me, my time is precious. If I can give you any information in regard to this girl I will do so with pleasure, but I cannot spend the morning here."

"I will tell you, Madam, why I am so disappointed at not finding the girl in this retreat. I feel that I can trust you to the fullest extent, else am I the most mistaken person in the world. If you do not see fit to assist me I will kindly ask that you will not betray my confidence in the matter that I must lay before you."

"This poor girl is a victim of cruel circum-



stances. The woman that placed her here and removed her to some other asylum is her aunt. A more heartless person never existed. She hates this young lady because her niece is in her way, and the only living heiress to a very large fortune."

"This explains what I could not understand. Evidently this aunt had a mistaken idea of the scope of this asylum. She wanted us to murder a helpless patient by giving her morphine, and hinted that the young girl had brought disgrace on the family by her dissolute habits. Sir, I am sorry she is a woman; I mean Madam V——, the one that wished to make me an accomplice in such a cowardly persecution of innocence."

"God bless you, Matron, for speaking out so boldly. I will tell you, further, that she sold, or tried to sell, this victim's virtue for money. I am a detective and am going to bring the guilty persons to justice. I know that I am struggling against the fat purses of the rich, but with God's help I will be successful."

"And I will help you all I can and keep the secret here in my heart. She evidently loves some one named Harry; at least, I gather thus much from her incoherent ramblings."

"I am glad you feel as you do about this patient. From what you say I am of the opinion that her case is not hopeless."



"It is more of a brooding melancholy. She is never violent but sits up in her bed and picks the cotton batting from the comfort; she does this mechanically. If she walks in the park, she will strip the leaves from the shrubbery and pulls each leaf to little bits."

A despondent look overspread the detective's face. "Is it as bad as that?" he queried. "I hoped that a sight of the man she loves would produce reaction. You know such things have been done; it is worth trying."

"Her case is far from hopeless. We did not hasten her cure because the woman threatened to take her away. I am very much attached to the maiden and wished to preserve her from a worse fate."

"I will detain you but one moment. I am going to find Madge, for this is her name, and bring her back to this place where Harry, her lover, can come to see her often. Do not be afraid to let them mingle, for this young man is the soul of honor. They have been sweethearts since they were children. I will see that you are paid for the trouble. Under no circumstances permit any one to remove her."

"You have placed me under so many obligations that I shall be a bankrupt when payday arrives."

Mr. Thompson was cautious. For this rea-



son he took down in that famous book the description of the driver, together with the number of the hack that conveyed him to the asylum. He had paid him and dismissed him, when he learned that the Vampire had abducted her niece.

“Tim has done his part of the business well; I am sure of this from the description the matron gave to me. I must shadow this driver else my chances will be small. I have had harder cases when I did not have the least showing for a starter. I have other work to do in a different direction. The Vampire outfooted me again. It is best to make haste slowly.”

When the disappointed man changed his disguise for an ordinary business suit he worked his way down to the City Hall and entered the register's office where the licenses for vehicles were issued. The books were neatly kept and alphabetically arranged. It had never occurred to him that he did not know Tim's last name. This was a serious obstacle to any further effort on his part. He ran his eyes along the long pages of the record but no familiar group of letters of the alphabet spelled out the name of Tim. There were scores of Browns, Joneses and Smiths. A happy thought came to him: the long pocketbook contained this evidence. He remembered the date of the entry and turned to the page that displayed



the number of Tim's hack. As the numbers were also arranged numerically he placed his dexter finger on the number, and followed the line out to the remark column, where he found the initial and the name, and opposite to this the remark, which was not complimentary to the hackman's reputation.

"Do you know where I can find Tim W——? I think a friend of mine paid him too much money; it was a mistake, you know. I am sure he would return the difference if I could find him."

The clerk gave the detective a look that plainly indicated that his questioner was just a shade verdant. He politely replied by saying: "Never saw Tim, did you? If you knew him well you would never ask such a question. Every person in this building knows him. He is always getting into trouble and always getting out of trouble; no one knows how he does it. They do say he has first-class backing." The motion that followed this remark, i. e., a sliding of the thumb of the right hand on the first and second fingers at the first joints, was significant and needed no further explanation.

"Where does his hack usually stand? I must make the effort to see him. Twenty dollars is too much money to pay for one short ride."

"Your friend was slumming, I suppose; got



off easy—dead easy. Those that come to the city sometimes lose ten times that amount and never squeal. The notoriety and fines make such little indiscretions come high.”

The twaddle of this glib-tongued youth, with his mammoth headlight diamond, bored the detective. Prudence restrained him from replying, because he had further use for him in the future. As he moved away from the register he turned to the young gentleman and said: “I thank you for the courtesy, sir; really, do I look so green that it is noticeable?”

“You are a good one,” was the reply.

Exactly what this meant the detective did not know. “I hope he did not see my star when I bended over the pages of the record. From what information I gleaned it is nothing unusual for persons to inquire for Tim. I must pin the badge further back under my arm.”

Mr. Thompson had no difficulty in locating Tim’s hack stand. The item he received from the clerk was verified by the memorandum in his book. Tim’s hack was there but there was another man driving it. With a due amount of caution he sauntered along the line of vehicles. The down-headed, sleepy horses that gave one a tired feeling, clearly indicated the hard life that these jaded beasts were compelled to endure. His philanthropy was swiftly dispelled by the eager cry: “Have a hack, sir! have a hack, sir!”



"I was looking for my friend Tim's turnout. He is so obliging I always give him the preference. He did me a good turn once and I am not the one to forget it."

"This is his hack; jump in; I will serve you just as well, if not better than Tim. He is in the country but will be back to-night."

"I will not need him 'till to-night; he knows what I want."

"A private snap, sir, I guess. Well, it is your own business, as for that; shall I tell him where to call?"

"A change of programme may make a call unnecessary. If I need him I will come back." He noted the shrewd glances that were directed towards him. He heard what they said about him. One of the faces was very familiar to him and recalled the person of the detective that betrayed him and caused him to undergo the miles of travel and the hardships that followed. He listened with attention because this detective was saying:

"That man, he was never a detective in his life. I know every one on the force. I can tell by the cut of his jib; no danger there. Tim gets paid for services that have no outward appearing; that is Tim's business, not ours."

"It is clear to me why the detective force is so unsuccessful," the detective said, "and further



explains why Tim so often eludes arrest. The chief should know this. That traitor thinks I am dead. How lucky it is that I did not report. I have too much at stake to settle with him now. This hack-hunting gives me a clue to follow. Madge is in the asylum in F——; it would take Tim just about the time his absence checks. So! so! my lady Vampire; you thought to throw the English officers down.”

“The retreat that is situated in the Village of F—— used to be a very respectable place. The matron, years gone by, was a kind-hearted woman. Madge will at least be treated with Christian kindness. I am almost sure of one thing, that she will not remain in this institution long. It is a temporary transfer. When the English writs are served, no process can issue.”

“Madge will be there at least three months. This will give the woman time to make another move. If the girl is not found, this circumstance will save pounds sterling for the estate. The Madam’s pin money will be discontinued; then the blackmailing will begin in earnest.”

“I must be sure that Madge is in this asylum, and if she has lucid moments I will give her to understand that Harry loves her still. Her desire to see him will make her cunning. By this means I will be able to locate her when she is returned to the city.”



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE RESCUE.

The train for F—— did not leave for four hours. He made all of his preparations for the journey, hailed a wagon that was for hire and was driven to the station with a creepiness that made his trip tiresome. He arrived just in time to purchase a second grade ticket. It was a lucky stroke of fortune that the slow gait of the spavined horse made him late. He saw two detectives on the alert for some one. His tramp costume made him an object of suspicion. The rush of the passengers to secure two seats each diverted the minds of the agency experts. Thus he slipped into a high-backed seat where his hat only showed above the top of the seat. The thick clouds of tobacco smoke made him sick. The flow of small talk gave him time to study the situation. The train pulled into the the village of F——, into the long shelter that protected the passengers from the weather.

The darkness favored his exit from the coach. Half sick and hungry, he sought his old friend,



whose dingy sign had weathered the gales for many a year. "The Inn has not changed since I was here, years ago. The roughly made benches are the same that old Peter, the carpenter, made when I was a boy. They were arranged around the three sides of the room with their backs to the wall. The tall counter of the bar was a reminder of the days when his boyish eyes looked longingly at the brown doughnuts and the fried chicken that adorned one end of the three-cornered arrangement that had the greasy register on one side and eatables on the other side. The office was a rendezvous for the gray beards who sipped and gossiped, and gossiped and sipped the beer that was never stale for the drawing. The little old-fashioned wood stove was filled with wood, for the night was raw; the dampness made the detective draw nearer to the heat that sent its cheerfulness to the farthest corner of the dingy room.

These loungers paid no attention to Mr. Thompson, as they traced up the marriage relationship of this family and that family, and aired all of the shortcomings of the human race in so far as the village was concerned. Madam V——— did not come under the tongue of good report; the fast life she led was the common property of the town. He was surprised at the accuracy of their information, the more so since the



dead village seldom exchanged letters with the metropolis. The Madam had distant relatives on her mother's side of the house, living in F——, and these relatives received letters from England. A thrill of satisfaction made him feel that his report to the home office was received.

The arrival of a stranger for the asylum created a fresh wave of excitement. The irritating secrecy only whetted their appetites the more, because the only respectable turnout that the place afforded was a carryall, that was used for delivering groceries and dead people. The curtains were closely clewed down. This circumstance aroused suspicion and curiosity was on tip toe to learn who the lady was that was in the retreat.

Fortunately the detective understood from a remark that was made that the family grocery at the corner was needing a general utility man. As this was the only place in F—— where food could be procured, the chances were that the retreat gave the aforesaid merchant the benefit of its purchases. There were so many tramps in the country that this particular tramp created no especial sensation. The group that separated for the night merely glanced at the stranger and humorously remarked: "Another candidate for street improvement; the town marshal will get him sure, to-morrow. I wish more would come;



it saves us the trouble of working on the roads, and also saves us the penalty for neglect."

The last sturdy burger had said good night. The landlord came up to the detective and with a kind manner of speech asked for his stipend for lodging. "Come, my good man, you must find lodgings somewhere else unless you pay me. Another piece of advice I will give you, and won't charge you anything for, is: get out of town as fast as you can. Everybody here makes an honest living; we have no room for idlers."

"I did not come to this town (whatever its name may be), to do nothing; it's not the likes of me to do it. Me fists are more ready than the place to work. It's myself that's been listening to the talk, and it's the grocer that's wanting a man to drive his wagon, and Barney's the wan to do it."

"How much have you got about your jeans? my good man. It is getting late; I must close or be fined."

The detective turned his pocket inside out and emptied the contents into his lap; a short-stem white clay pipe, three old buttons, a knife with all of the blades broken, a five-cent bag of tobacco, and two nickels, completed the inventory. "It's not meself that'l be robbed; I'm an honest man and invy no man his wilth. A corner to slleep, and a bite of bread, is the ixtint uv me wants."



"Give me the nickels, and you can sleep in the barn, and a bite you shall have in the morning. I will say a good word for you, to-morrow. I like the way you talk. We will make a good citizen of you yet; be off with you." The kind-hearted landlord went outside and closed the old-fashioned shutters, just as he had done years ago. The iron bar that stretched diagonally across the blind on the outside was secured on the inside by a bolt that fastened on the inside.

The detective took the blankets that the landlord gave him and made a comfortable night of it in the hay-loft. He scooped out a place in the hay and, thus protected by blankets, slept soundly until morning. "The old town has not changed a particle since I was here the last time." He said this as he rubbed his eyes that smarted from the seeds that sifted down on him while he snoozed. The clear water from the pump was gathered by making his hands a water-tight cup in which he buried his face. As there was no towel he waited for the sun and air to evaporate the moisture. Thus refreshed, he went to the kitchen and sat upon the doorstep where he waited for something to eat. The fast of the night before sharpened his appetite. As he sat there he saw the landlord speak to the grocer.

The tramp surmised that the landlord and the grocer were making some arrangement whereby



he was to be benefited. The cheery voice of the innkeeper summoned him to the low-ceilinged store that smelled loudly of kerosene oil and bacon. "I have you fixed up, my man, if you are willing to work for your board, which will, of course, be furnished by me."

The detective mentally smiled, because the transparency of the transaction was too evident. A new boarder was added to the register. It suited Mr. Thompson's purpose exactly. Without waiting for orders, he slipped around to the stable that was constructed of pine slabs, ended up and secured by strips nailed on the inside.

The sleepy-eyed animal merely opened one eye in a knowing manner that plainly said: "Why do you come to disturb my lazy rest?" Even the rubbing down he received was acknowledged by a sleepy yawn. The utility man made himself useful in a dozen ways, all of which was duly noted by the man in the store. He gave the harness a good oiling, and went over the carry-all with soap and water until the rig was respectable enough to be used at a funeral, not to speak of passengers from the station. This part of the duty he did not relish—the prominent part of runner—for the eye-to-business landlord brought him in contact with the traveling public.

One week passed away in dreary style. The asylum did not seem to be in any particular need



of something to eat. This delay gave him time to think. The situation was critical. The brick walls were of unusual height. He felt assured that he could see Madge. The feat of getting her out of the dismal place was a hard nut to crack. In vain he cudgeled his brain to invent some means of escape. He ran over the well-thumbed day-book that had once done duty for an assessor's office. Monday was the time that the institution would send an order. He learned this from the handwriting of the matron on the order file. He even remembered the extra flourishes of the capital letters, and the peculiar way of forming the I's, which were started from a dot on the ruled line and made with an upward stroke of the pen. The matron was in charge; there could be no doubt of the truth. He waited impatiently for Monday to come. In the meantime he kept from sight of the curious by remaining in the stable. He ended up the corn in the cob, and arranged the oat sacks in neat piles against the sawed sides of the slabs, and trimmed the horse's mane and the fetlocks that were a curiosity.

When the detective made everything neat about the barn, he climbed over the old-fashioned stake-and-rider rail fence, and made his way to the forest that was across the meadow. He strolled along through the depths of woods and came out



on the other side, just as he had done years ago. The paths that were then only out of the grass had been washed until they were gullies. The brown clay was as hard as a rock, and the hardy wild flowers that crowned their banks made the rescue more feasible. It was ten miles to the station that adorned the second railroad, where a newer town had grown up with a mushroom rapidity. Following these clay washouts it would be an easy matter for Madge and himself to escape.

"I wonder," he reflected, "if the old drain pipe at the asylum is intact. It was a neglected affair when I was here. The iron grating must be pretty well rusted by this time. If Madge is in any condition to travel, the rescue will be easy to execute; if she is not, then I must act more boldly. The bars of the drain are wrought iron. The old rusted crow-bar that leans against the rear stable wall has been there so long that its very existence is forgotten; the weeds have concealed it from sight."

"It will answer my purpose. To-night, I will pry the bars far enough apart to crawl through. It will be an easy matter to replace them when my object is accomplished." As he slept in the stable no one would be able to track him. Little fear he had, for the town marshal was the first one in and the last one out.



When the orderly town was enveloped in darkness, he slid down the hay and gathered up the rusted lever. He did not go through the streets but circled the suburbs with considerate caution. Once in the shadow of the wall of the asylum, his confidence returned; he felt his way to the east wall and stopped at the culvert that was choked with weeds.

He counted the iron bars that formed the grating and selected three nearest the end because they were longer. When the opening was large enough to admit his body he crawled through. The drain had not been used for years; for this reason he made his exit from the curbing and stood in the middle of the court-yard that was enclosed by a double wall. By the starlight he could see the galleries above. Some irresistible impulse made him bold. There was no vigilant watch-dog to growl and thus give the alarm. He pulled off his shoes and crept along the floor to the second tier of cells. As Madge was harmless, he reasoned that she would be in one of the two larger and more comfortable rooms. One apartment was empty; he could see this by the moon's rays that made squares on the polished floor. A strange feeling came over him. He steadied himself by leaning for a moment on the door jamb. By the uncertain light he saw the bed in one corner. Someone was in the bed. To



arouse her was a dangerous proceeding. If she screamed, then his deeply-laid plan would end in failure.

She was conscious of some feeling that science can not explain, and sat up in bed to listen. The suspense was terrible. If he advanced towards her, terror would cause her to give the alarm. If he delayed, he would not have such another chance. In a low breath he repeated the name of "Harry," then he whispered again, "Harry wants to see you."

The effect was magical. Without a moment's hesitation she glided to the entrance whence the whispering proceeded. "Madge," he said softly, "I come to take you to Harry; do not make a noise; be quiet and follow me." When the girl came into the moonlight, and they were safely out of the walls, the detective turned to look at her. The tangled, unkempt hair almost hid her face that had not been washed for a month. She reminded him of a beautiful gypsy. Her large black eyes were dull. She walked and acted like one that had been hypnotized. She did not say yea, nor nay, but was as obedient as a child to his every wish.

"My God," he thought, "they are carrying out the Vampire's orders to the letter. She, this child, is drugged with morphine; it is providential for me that it is so, because I can handle her so



easily." The girl waited until her guide had forced back the bars to their original position. He did not return the crowbar to the stable, but buried it in the bottom of the ravine where the first rain would pack the dirt around it. They crept along ravines, and across meadows. Their journey was painfully slow, because the tired girl rested often. He carried her in his arms, and thus they made their way to J——, and were fortunate enough to catch the midnight train for the city.

"Come, Madge, my good girl, let me tie up your hair. I have here an old piece of a pocket comb. I will smooth down your hair in front. You are a good child, and must look your best when Harry comes to see you. How fortunate it is for me that this poor patient is unconscious. We have attracted no attention. I will avoid the hack stand, and get off on the off side of the coach. The electric light befriended the detective and the girl. For a time the surroundings were in total darkness. Cautiously they sped from street to street, until the station was many blocks away. The child leaned heavily upon his arm. The effects of the morphine buoyed her up. They stood at the side door of the retreat, whence Madge was taken, as the attendants were up and about (because the morning star was growing brighter every moment). He placed the child in



the shade of the wall and summoned the matron to the side door.

"Who is it?" she asked, in a doubtful tone of voice. "This is no time to call respectable people from their beds. Why did you not come around by the front entrance?"

"I have rescued Madge from a morphine asylum. Can you arrange it so that we can get her in without detection? She is drugged with morphine now."

"Wait a moment, I will see if the way is clear. Depend upon me; she shall be under my especial charge in a part of the building where no one ever comes. I will give her up to no one; trust me for that, and I will be a mother to her. The officers came while you were gone but, of course, did not find her."

"How fortunate," the detective replied. "I will make a deposit, to-morrow. I want her to look her best when Harry calls; here is his picture; do not let another person see her."

Mr. Thompson was tired when he reached the rooms of Harry. He inserted the night latch key, and without awakening the sleepers, resumed his ordinary garb of a professor and waited for daylight to break. The comfortable armchair was too seductive. He slept until the shake on his arm aroused him. Harry was so astonished that he could not for a moment speak.



"Where in the name of all that is wonderful, did you come from, Mr. Thompson? I thought it was your ghost that had returned from the polar regions. Claud feared that they had again attempted your life."

"I caught the trail of Madge and followed it to the end. She is in a secure place." The detective laid his hand affectionately on Harry's arm and continued: "You are the only one in the world that can restore the poor child to reason. I hope you have not gone too far with Blanche. I have your word of honor that you will carry out to the letter the promises you made to me more than a year ago. Remember, I do not expect impossibilities. If Madge has fallen, you are a free man. The girl's terrible persecution must appeal to your sense of manhood. Go to see her often, my boy. I want you to feel, and to know, the love that shames dissimulation is a link to bind her struggling reason to the mind, where you are king."

"Then I must give up the dream of a lifetime, give up Blanche and the immediate prospects of a partnership, for Madge, who may never regain her faculties, and thus lose both ends of the opportunity. You are asking a great deal of me, Mr. Thompson."

"How can you wed Blanche, when her father has made a wreck of your good name? Every hour



the ghosts of his evil deeds will come back to him when you are his son-in-law." Thompson was sorry he made such a remark, because he feared that Harry would decline the merchant's liberal offer to re-employ the man he (the merchant) had so foully wronged.

"It all seems so strange to me, Mr. Thompson, that I should be placed in such a position in the game of life. Some turn up trump cards and win; some hold from the same deck all of the lower cards and lose. You were right; I feel what it is to be under the ban of the slanderers' tongue. I never imagined that I looked like a murderer, yet people saw in my face a resemblance to that type of faces. Especially was this the case when my beard had grown and my hair was uncombed. There is nothing else to do but take the position, as Claud is on his last legs so far as his practice is concerned."

Mr. Thompson wanted to press the young man to his heart, and tell him what a bright future was hidden behind the somber clouds of misfortune, but he could not. He could not tell him of all the strange vicissitudes of a detective's existence, when the future might slip from his possession and his hopes melt into nothingness. He raised his eyes from the carpet to meet the honest gaze of the accountant. There was an interchange of



thought that these two persons understood, and both remained silent.

“When do you go to work in the office? I think it is best for you to keep your thoughts upon your books; then you will not brood upon the injustice of your fellowman. Do not encourage Blanche, nor commit your better judgment to the whisperings of a false honor; that may wreck your future happiness. We can appreciate the nobleness of this merchant's daughter, who braved the dangers of social ostracization to visit you while you were in prison, and now deems it an honor to walk by your side, in the very face of public opinion. She is a noble woman, Harry; you have high honor on one side, and misfortune on the other. Which will you select?”

“You say that I am the medium that has the power to restore to Madge her reason? That my name can recall the faculties that are dormant? You tell me that she will outlive the horrors of that awful night and be the Madge of old?”

“That is what they say at the asylum. Promise me that you will at least wait until this point is settled.”

“I will do as you wish, and thus lose, through my endeavors to cure the little playmate of my childhood, the love that is so sincere, the love of Blanche. Can you ask more?”

“Will you go to see her now? Poor Madge,



when I was stealing her away from the asylum your name seemed to be a magnet. Thus I drew her to my side, and together we made our escape."

While the young man made an extra toilet, the detective sank back in the great arm chair and waited for the departure. "Harry," he said, "I will wait here until you return; make my heart glad and bring good news. The matron has your picture, so there will be no difficulty in making yourself known; stay, perhaps it would be best to consult the matron; the shock of meeting you might be too much for her nervous system."

"I will follow her directions implicitly," replied Harry, as he went slowly down the steps. "Thompson, no one knows but you the importance of this meeting. A great throbbing of my pulse makes me weak. I will take a nerve steadier from this black bottle. How little sometimes turns the wheel of destiny. I am satisfied that Madge knows this double of Harry's. She will in her half-lucid moments reveal more than I could find out in a month. I will at least note his name, and, perhaps, get a clue to his haunts. Madam V——— has not been with him since that night when she drugged the rich bachelor, around at the club. How quietly this owl works, and



never leaves a track behind. He is a good one if he can get away from Thompson." He dozed off and was revolving all these points in his hazy brain when a touch on his arm awakened him.

The intruder was Harry, whose face was white as marble. "Ah! Mr. Thompson, Madge is in a wretched condition. The sight of me almost threw her into a spasm. She persisted in calling me Jean D——. I do not wish to go again; the sight of the poor girl unmanned me."



## CHAPTER XV.

### THE WAXFACE MAN.

"Good! I expected thus much, my boy. Better this than an imbecile mind that is a blank. Do not discontinue the noble work. I have more hopes of Madge than ever. Did she say anything about his lounging places or speak of the other woman? This is the man that has been doing all the crimes and you have been shouldering the grave responsibility. Try and remember what she said because it is important."

"Here is a love letter she gave to the matron for me, and yet she does not want to see me. I don't understand it all."

The detective took the note in his hands and scrutinized it closely. It was a strange piece of composition. The jumble of words was meaningless; here was a sentence almost completed, then a succession of curved lines. "I must study this puzzle. To-morrow, when you go I will be there also. I feel very much encouraged."

When Harry was gone he lighted the lamp and pondered long on the bit of paper where rea-



son struggled to reassert itself. "Here are some figures, too; let me see what I can make of them. I will place these numbers in every conceivable position and try to run down this villain."

The puzzle must be unraveled. Ah! here an idea comes to me. This arrangement gives me No. ——— street. No. ———. I will see what the place looks like; no harm in trying; it may mean much and it may mean little. He did not go to his boarding house but ate supper at the nearest restaurant and walked briskly, for the reason that the heavy meal was giving him a full feeling that resembled dyspepsia. "Well! well! quite a home fitted with every luxury that money can buy."

He crept up to the silver door plate and spelled out the name. A grunt of satisfaction came from his throat as he muttered: "through the shattered brain of Madge, the man who has perhaps wrought her ruin, is in my power at last. I shall yet live to see him dangle from the end of a rope. I am almost sure he was with Madam V——— when the bachelor was put to sleep forever by the doping process. I must find out what the Vampire's reasons were for this murder. It will do no harm to anyone if I stand here and discover the class of persons that visit this night-owl. It would be dangerous to shadow the house in the day time; all my work must be done at night."



It was, perhaps, between ten and eleven at night when his long vigil was disturbed by the approach of a female figure. Her face was thickly veiled; her erect carriage and energetic step made him think it was the Vampire bent on some errand of mischief.

She pulled the door bell with a nervous jerk that plainly indicated that matters of importance were uppermost in her mind. She gave a second and a more vigorous ring that was unanswered. She drew from her pocket a night latch key and crept guiltily into the hall. Evidently the person she wished to see was not within, for she came to the head of the iron stairway outside and looked up and down the street in a bewildered manner and started to go, then came back.

A figure turned the corner quickly, and as it approached the woman, Thompson gazed for the third time at the colorless marble face of the man that ruined Harry. How the detective's fingers worked nervously to be at the man's throat. "Not yet," he thought; "I must fasten this crime on him good and hard. No mistakes, Thompson, no mistakes!"

"Why were you not in the house," the woman exclaimed in a petulant tone of voice. "The devil is to play. We have been outwitted by someone from England. If that sneaking detective were alive, I would certainly say that it was



the work of his hands, but his death is a fixed fact because I know it to be true."

"How do you know it to be true?" he asked, in a subdued whisper. "Come, tell us your reason for saying so; I would rather see the devil than that man."

The viper dared not tell this man that she was married; that her husband was a ruffian and far beneath her in a social way; that he was a sea captain that Blanche's father always kept on a foreign cruise, for reasons well known to the viper. Then she said, slowly: "since we are partners in crime, I do not mind telling you that I have a husband that murdered this detective to get him out of the way; therefore, I know that he is dead, because my husband never fails when such work is on hand."

With an oath, he said: "don't talk so loud; this is no place to tell such things. What about the girl's escape from the asylum? It is more important than the murder of this detective. The game is lost if we do not find her; all our years of plotting and scheming will be for naught. Already they suspect that something is wrong. That old shark of a lawyer must draw up some papers to smooth over the difficulties. It is getting too hot for me; I think the climate of Paris is better for my health."

"You will leave me here to fight it out? And



if you escape, and they arrest me, what then, good sir?"

"You hypnotized me. When you get the money you can come over, too, and help me enjoy it. But what do you propose to do about your niece? How in the world did it happen?"

"No one seems to know. She disappeared so mysteriously that the matron is dumbfounded. A tramp came to the inn and worked around for three or four days and disappeared at the same time that Madge did. Nothing was disturbed about the asylum. There is positively no clue to start a tracer. Tim took her out there; you must find this man without delay."

"I will go at once. There is no time to lose. You should have put her out of the way as the lawyer told you."

"Why did you not do so yourself? You are as much interested as myself. I have given you the lion's share, and never a cent have I paid the lawyer." She said this with some warmth, because she loved this man who was content to live on the wages of sin.

"Never paid the lawyer?" he exclaimed, in surprise. "You are in his power, woman; he can blow on us at any time. This is worse than I expected. I would not be surprised if he was the prime mover in this abduction."

"I have him in my power, just as I have you;



one goes, all go. You have committed one murder; another will make no difference to you one way or the other."

"You are a she-devil," he hissed in her ear; "you have not one grain of pity for your niece; you are shielding her for some concealed purpose and will give us the slip, some day."

She laughed a wicked laugh, and sneered: "What made you so smart? Anyway, it is too late for any of us to draw back now; you must make some money to pay the legal shark, do you hear? Don't stand there with your head down like a whipped schoolboy; go and find Tim at once. If you cannot find him at his hack stand, go to his den and give him the word; he will admit you, and know who sent you."

"I was going to the club," he remarked, "but as you say, this matter is serious and needs attention at once. It will be difficult to find the place, and it is as much as a man's life is worth to go into that part of the city. You say it is the second house from the corner of the alley, and has a half-story with a queer roof?"

"You cannot possibly miss it if you tried. Give two knocks and count four; then give two knocks more and wait; then one knock, and you will be admitted. Question him closely, and if he refuses to answer tell him to come to me."

"Shall I hire a hack?" he inquired. "If the



distance is not great I would prefer to walk; there are too many cooks making this broth, and it is apt to be overdone. Where shall I meet you?"

"I will wait here until you come back." She went into the house, and the Night Owl, without making haste, walked fifteen blocks and turned down a blind alley. He traversed this to the end, where it led into a narrow, crooked street. The house was not hard to find. He stood on the little portico and rapped softly as he was directed. A bloated face came to the door; it was a woman, whose sharp, gray eyes looked him through and through. He repeated, softly, the countersign, and was shown into a side room that contained a table in the center, with chairs around it as if some game had been played. The odor of whiskey and tobacco spit made him feel sick. He started to open one of the windows. A hand was laid on his arm and an ugly look that was not to be mistaken, caused the Night Owl to lower the window and sit down.

Tim came in with a slick, officious bearing that plainly said: "it is a pleasure to be truculent so long as it pays me." His extreme caution would have been comical but for the fact that caution was his best capital. He meekly remarked: "Who followed you; you did not have the sense



to look around; we have, your honor, sharp eyes on the lookout."

"I noticed a man in dark clothes several times but have no idea that he was trailing me."

The detective was aware that these same sharp eyes were following his movements. As he could not hear what these two worthies said, he drew heavily on his wits in order to throw them off of their guard. The street was poorly lighted; for this circumstance he was profoundly thankful. It was the work of a moment to turn his coat inside out, and his cap also. He slipped his glasses over his eyes and looked inquiringly along until he had cleared the street, and reached the main thoroughfare, where he was lost in the crowd of pedestrians.

Tim and the night owl breathed easier as the inquisitive visitor passed out of the alley. They did not see the shadower turn the coat that was made especially for such occasions, or the cap also that was made for a double purpose. As the man that followed the night owl was dressed in dark clothes, the subject was changed to a subject that was to be handled gingerly, because the visitor could not accuse Tim of acting in bad faith in his own house, and he really wondered why he was such a fool as to come on such an errand. He assumed a tone of carelessness as he drawled out:



"Tim, the crazy girl has been taken from the asylum where you placed her, and the Madam thinks you had a hand in the escape. Is it true, or is it not true? She accuses you of bad faith; tell me what you know."

The dazed hackman looked at the Night Owl in astonishment. "It is impossible," he said; "no one in the village knew that she had been put in the asylum, unless it was the man that drove the carryall, and he was too sleepy to see anything. The Madam has done it herself to beat us in the game; she is a shrewd one and don't you forget it; she and the lawyer are playing a little side-game of their own."

"You are sure, Tim, that you know nothing about it? Her escape is a godsend if the English have no hand in it, because they cannot serve the legal notice."

The Night Owl shook hands with Tim and walked quickly out of the alley to the same busy street where the detective was waiting for him. Both boarded a car and alighted at the same corner. The shadowed man did not notice the man that shadowed him. The loss of his handsome gold watch and chain made him nervous, consequently he was in no mood to talk to the Vampire, who waited for his arrival with extreme impatience.

When he was in the presence of the woman



he growled: "your miserable striker stole my watch and chain before my nose, and he knows nothing of the abduction; he has done his part of the dirty work."

As they were standing under the balcony, their criminations and recriminations were of no value to Thompson, who glided into the shadows of the tall buildings, and walked briskly to the rendezvous, where he changed his reversible suit for the Prince Albert coat and the vest and trousers to match. He had been absent from the boarding house ten days. The curiosity of the madam was a factor in his plans that he had not counted on. Nothing escaped her prying eyes. He noticed this the moment he entered his room. Every letter had been overhauled, some of the slides to his microscope had been handled, and they had been handled by a professional, because the thumb and forefinger marks on the plates were on the extreme ends of the slides. The digits evidently revealed the truth that the one who examined them was a chemist, because the use of reagents had deepened the diminutive furrow marks of the skin.

"She has taken these slides to a real chemist. I am thankful that she did take them, because the slides were exactly what I represented them to be. I displayed them for this purpose, knowing that she would do just as she did. I will no-



tice how she acts; if she is indifferent then I will go on with my investigation; otherwise, I will give her further lessons in the science. My letters have been overhauled. I baited the trap to catch the mice, and again I am the gainer thereby. Poor fool! does she think she can shield her crimes behind the power of wealth? Such crimes, sooner or later, become their own executioners."

"I do not care to learn who this chemist is, but I do care to know who paid him for this investigation. All of these expenses drift back to this merchant, who thrives on the misfortune of others. I will make a note of it and trust to Harry's good sense to help me in this strait."



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THOMPSON HYPNOTIZED.

He heard the madam come hurriedly up to her room, and he also heard the rustle of feminine garments as they were cast aside. He heard the orders to the maid, and the hurrying of feet up and down stairs; he heard her ask if the professor was in. For this reason he adjusted a low-power objective and was observing some fine specimens of algae, when the Viper came in without knocking and in her most sympathetic tone of voice saluted him with: "You dear professor, where have you been? I was so anxious about you I could not sleep. Don't you see how nervous I have gotten? If you had stayed away another week I would have died. I am so glad you are here once more."

"If I had known it would have been the cause of your death I would certainly stayed away. This American experience is so singular, that a poor lone man has to be careful in these up-to-date times. Are all landladies like yourself?" He asked this with an amused smile that disconcert-



ed her. She expected him to show some ill-temper, but he did not. With some show of warmth, she continued: "I have been warming your meals with painstaking care; if you were going away you should have told me; I will make no deductions for absence. Sir, you can count on this; it is a rule of the house."

"I am not complaining, madam; you have my board in advance; besides, I give you less trouble than any boarder in the house."

"Why do you not want to tell me when you are going to be absent? The other guests do this; then I know just how much to order for the table. I pay you particular attention because you are a star boarder."

"I shall try and prove to you that I am a star boarder, madam, but I will not tell you at any time when I go, or when I come. Tell me, now, where do you go, when you go out, if you exact such information from me? I shall expect you to give an account of yourself. It is my pleasure to enjoy myself in my own way so long as I do not distress my conscience with unlawful deeds. I am studying your American science, and will return to Europe when my course is finished."

She winced when he spoke of a conscience, because hers had become so hardened by crime that she looked on man as her especial property. To ruin and betray mankind was her greatest pleas-



ure, therefore those who knew her well named her The Vampire. He knew what she wanted to ask; he knew why she was making passes across his face. His strength of mind was a fort she could not reduce to submission. "What queer movements of the hands are those you are making? Are you trying to hypnotize me?"

"I was just trying to see if I could; just for fun, you know." She said this with a little artless laugh that came from a lost soul. There was so much venom in it, all of the pent up rage of a devil rippled in the effort. Then she looked more serious and added: "you are the strangest man I ever saw; you do not care for anybody in the world outside of that old brass instrument, and your books; this is why I like you. If you cared for me, and I could use you, I would despise you. The man has succumbed to my power," she said.

The look of a demon came to her face. Like a serpent that was coiling around its prey, she glided towards the victim that sat upright in his seat, and stared at the woman with awful eyes. It reminded her of the stare of a blind man, whose eyes were open and fixed, staring at awful nothing. Even the Vampire was afraid to approach him, but something in her mind made her movements cat-like. As she drew near, and nearer, she ran her hand into the side pocket of his coat



where he kept his long leathern pocketbook; fortunately he had locked it in his other trunk. In a moment he grasped her arm and hurled her across the room; she arose, panting and pale.

"My God! what are you trying to do, rob me?" he exclaimed, excitedly. "I do not know what this means." He drew his hand mechanically across his face as one whose mind was in a dazed condition. "I shall get out of this house and I will have you arrested for attempted robbery from the person."

"Do not do this; I am a woman, and so weak; forgive me this time; I won't do so any more; please, sir, will you promise me?"

"What did you expect to find in my pocket-book, madam? I have no money, only a modest competency, enough to keep soul and body together. I will forgive you this time, but don't do it again."

"I won't! I won't!" she gratefully exclaimed. "Oh! sir, I thank you with all of my heart." She said this with the penitential air of a saint, and hurried to her room. When the door closed behind her, she hissed: "I wonder who this strange man is? I wonder if he was acting only, just as I was acting my part; but, oh! he looked so awfully at me, it made my blood run cold. It seemed that the confines of hell had sent him to me for a ghost of vengeance, yet he is a man in



the flesh and blood and seemed human enough. It was my foolish fears; my nerves are so unsteady now." She turned a flask of whiskey to her lips and drank a heavy draught, then went out to give her orders for the coming meal.

When she had departed the detective laughed till his sides ached, as he said: "Well done for you, Thompson, with a 'p;' quite an actor in your way. It was, indeed, fortunate that I left the precious evidence in my trunk; my good sense told me that she would rob me in some way yet. I did not expect it to come in this way. What an awful Vampire she is. I wonder who told her about my pocketbook, for she went straight to the place where I keep it. We are playing a desperate game; especially is this the case with me, because I do not wish to flush the covey until I can bag them all."

No one at the supper table imagined for a moment that the calm-faced professor had passed through such an ordeal. The stale jokes were laughed at; now it was the butter, then it was some other article of diet. He noticed that the landlady had imbibed too much, for which reason he was thankful. Her drowsy appearance was a good piece of acting. He observed the quick glances that were now and then sent in his direction. He also noted the hurried orders she gave to the waiters. She excused her absence from



the dining room and went to her room to lie down.

The detective was not deceived by this excuse and awaited further developments. She glided down the back stairway and slipped through the blind alley to the street. He could hardly keep up with the rapid pace that carried her to the before-mentioned club, where she met the Night Owl coming down the steps.

"Don't go in there; Jim D—— is in there; I do not want to meet him. I owe him a debt of honor, namely, a gambling debt; he is disposed to be ugly about it. When is that money coming from over the pond? My luck is all at sea. I cant' even hedge. Besides, your friend, the merchant, has rented the property that I thought would be mine, and I have to vacate."

"You are out of luck. I have no sterling exchange to turn over to you, and cannot spare any from my house. Madge is still on the missing list. Take it all in all, the outlook is not encouraging." She drew nearer to him, and, in a whisper, said: "Why not marry the merchant's daughter?"

"I feel like cursing you. I marry that sweet, pure girl, who loves the man I so deeply wronged? You are a devil from hell."

All of the pent up anger of her heart burst forth as she hissed: "I picked you up out of the



gutter, dressed you up like a dandy, and helped you cheat at cards a hundred times, and now you use such language to me."

"Is this my only chance to recoup my miserable luck?" he whined; "these luxuries come high, but I must have them. Tell me what to do; you know she loves this man with all of the ardor of her noble nature. She even visited him while he was in prison."

"In the first place, you must study Harry's walk and manner. I know it is hard for you to act the part of a gentleman."

"You are right," he muttered gloomily; "how in the world I was so unfortunate as to come under the spell of your evil nature I swear I cannot tell. Well, what else am I to do? I owe her father a grudge."

"Copy his manner of dressing, even to the ties he wears around his standing collars. You have the same tone of voice, speak more briskly, and, last of all, appear to be indifferent. You will have no difficulty in wooing this rich girl. Slip away and have the marriage ceremony performed. When she is yours the old gentleman will come down handsomely; he will applaud the trick because he hates Harry."

"Why should he hate that poor simpleton, who never wronged him? This is the dirtiest



work of all, but my debts are pressing. I cannot and will not go to the wall."

"You know that it is human nature to hate those we have wronged. This is a strange world. While you are working the girl, I will blackmail the father; between the two, we should raise a stake, and it must be a fair divide. You must economize until I get my hands on that English money, then we will skip the country and enjoy the fruits of our labor."

"What will I do with the girl after we are married?"

"You can drop her by the way; the real Harry can then step in and claim his own. Why do you look so sour? I will see to it that you get a marriage settlement."

"There are some men noticing us across the street; let me see you when the courting is on. Meet me in the ——— Park, Saturday night, at ten o'clock, without fail. I will have some money for you."

"Have you no news from your niece?"

"The detective from the agency is hunting her up. If we find her you must represent the accountant again and toll her out where we can get hold of her once more. I have an asylum that will take care of this precious bit of human flesh. You are playing a star part in this thril-



ling drama, that may turn into a miserable tragedy."

"Did you find out who your boarder was? You seemed to think that he was a detective in the disguise of a professor."

"Too stupid to talk about. I tried to hypnotize him, and frightened him out of his wits. The pocketbook was not there; I have been through everything."

"And found no evidence?" he asked. "I am glad this phantom is out of the way; what would you have done if you had learned that he was a detective?"

"I should have poisoned him. Do you think I am going to lose my chance at this fortune? Not much; I am not built that way."

"Then we can work with perfect safety now that your suspicion is groundless. I will be at the appointed place and report the progress I am making."

"There you go, you scoundrels," the detective muttered. "You ought to have irons on you now. How this piece of villainy plays into my hand! It would serve this merchant right, but I cannot see this innocent girl go under; she is not responsible for her father's sins. I will not lose sight of this Night Owl for a moment. He will take advantage of Harry's attentions to Madge and press his suit. Blanche has never



seen this creature, and will fall an easy prey to his deceptive allurements."

"This is Harry's afternoon at the asylum. I will move in that direction and note the change that will make our patient better or worse. If she recalls that awful night, her condition will be hopeless. If she is simply approached in a natural manner, the shock will be reduced to a minimum. I must reach there before my boy does and let his presence be known gradually." He was admitted; without loss of time he made his wishes known to the matron.

The neat appearance of the maiden was in contrast with the dirt and squalor of the neglected object of his affection. Her listless air was a reproach to him. He led her gently by the hand and seated her upon a rustic seat where the shade was grateful. "Look into my eyes, Madge; that is a good child; don't you know me? Madge, I took you out of that dreadful place at your old home and brought you here so that Harry, your playmate, could come to see you." It was some catchy tone of voice that aroused her; perhaps the long ago came to her and her eyes filled with tears.

A glance of recognition rewarded his patient effort, then she relapsed into a stage of melancholy where memory was struggling with shattered reason. Again she looked at him with a puz-



zled expression that had intelligence in every stare. She sat closer to his side as if claiming his protection.

"Madge, would you like to see Harry? He is coming to you now; be a good girl and shake hands with him."

There was no gleam of recognition in the melancholy expression that was fixed for a moment on the pale face of Harry. His incarceration in prison had whitened a naturally colorless skin. So many disappointments had numbed his feelings that the sight of Madge, after so many years of separation, did not stir the inner depths of his manhood. The sorrow of his soul was touched as he took the poor girl's hand in his own, and while he stroked it gently, he said: "Madge, do not look down; I am Harry, the one who used to be your playmate; don't you know I used to bring you wild flowers? You laughed at me then because I used to put soap on my hair, and turn it under at the ends, and then let it dry until it was like a cushion; don't you remember this, sweetheart?"

The tears slowly gathered in her listless eyes. Now and then her face would light up with intelligence. The words of Harry had evidently stirred the depths of long ago, because she patted him on the cheek, and brushed back the stray locks of his hair in an odd, mechanical way, that



gave him hope. Then she ran her fingers over his shapely nose, like a person who was blind, and who was struggling with some inner emotion.

Then the horror of the last meeting would make her shrink away from him, yet the old affection would reassert itself, and she would lay her head on his two hands and hide the tears.

“Do not check her tears, Harry; they are the safety valves to relieve the overburdened soul. I feel so much encouraged by this interview. Time, and your affection, will make a permanent cure. Speak of the past; she recalls those days, imperfectly as yet, still they do come to her and reason begins where memory ends.”

“Madge, do you remember the bunny I gave you, and how he bit your finger?” She drew her hand quickly from his and held the wounded finger just as she had done years ago. “There ! there ! let me kiss it and it will be well.”

“My God, Harry, she has been hypnotized by that Vampire, and the shock unsettled her mind—the shock of that awful night; but the work of that infamous devil comes unconsciously back through the malady that afflicts her. There is hope, Harry, there is hope, and my mind is relieved on this one point. Keep up the good work and happiness shall yet be yours.”



“We must go now, Madge. We will come again; do you want us to come again?”

She clung to Harry with all of the abandon of a child. The bright, happy look that came to her face while he was present faded into the same mournful expression that had been habitual for months. The matron gave her some sedative powders and conducted her to her room, that was adjoining the matron's.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### BLANCHE IN DANGER.

“Harry,” the detective suggested, “we must not be seen together. You make your way to your rooms by one route, and I will go by another. If I am not there do not look for me, for I have some duty that is important to accomplish.” As this was the second day that he had shadowed the Night Owl, and the meeting in the park was fixed for the following night, he felt reasonably certain that this scoundrel would pay Blanche a visit before the moon was up, because the enclosure of the merchant prince would be shadowed by the trees and foliage. It was a curious study to Mr. Thompson as he passed unobserved into the park.

“I wonder,” he meditated, “if this merchant’s daughter will know the difference, or rather feel the difference, between these two men; both so much alike that they could be taken for twins; yet, how unlike in character and disposition.” He did not have to wait long. In some manner the Night Owl had managed to communicate with



Blanche; he had Harry's trick of throwing a small pebble at the window.

"The scoundrel!" Thompson exclaimed. "He has been lying in wait for Claud, to kill him. He must have been the one that struck my friend such a murderous blow from behind. I can recall it all now. I hope Blanche's father did not hire this miserable assassin to do the dirty work. Here comes the poor, deluded girl; I will creep closer and listen."

"Is that you, Harry?" the maiden said in a startled whisper. "I received your note; your hand must have been shaky when you wrote it. Somehow I don't feel that it is you; come into the light and let me see your face." A puzzled expression came to her eyes as she remarked: "Somehow, Harry, I ain't glad to see you; not as glad as I used to be; I don't know what has come over me, and besides this Harry's love has never stepped beyond the bonds of friendship. If you are him, you chill me more than ever; come some other night, perhaps I will feel better."

"Blanche," he repeated softly, "why do you address me thus? I came to make a proposal to you, to-night; come, we will get married at once; the church is only four squares from here; do you doubt my love for you? Is this not a proof of my affection? Could you ask more?"



She again stared at him with an incredulous expression and remained silent. A nameless dread made her shiver, yet she could not tell why. "Harry," she said, "I used to love you; somehow I have changed. It may be your indifference has brought this about. I will not go with you to the church. Give me time to think it all over. Father's troubles are running me mad. I believe I am losing my mind under the strain. Don't come to see me any more because father does not like you."

"If I will gain his consent will you promise to marry me? I think you are mistaken when you say he does not like me. Is he in the house?"

"No! no! don't come; he has forbidden me to speak to you, and yet he sees you in the office every day." Then a hope came to her, for she continued: "Come, I will show you the way."

As she ushered him into the presence of the merchant a faint smile came to her lips. She introduced the young man to her father by saying: "Papa, look up from your work; here is Harry; he stands before you as a suitor for my hand. I know you will not refuse him for my sake. We have loved each other very long; let us make up and be friends."

Mr. ——— raised his eyes from the trial balance he was scanning. The expression of his face was a study. He knew that Harry was in



the office because he had just come from there. Then the truth dawned upon him. With a helpless movement of his arms he bowed his head and groaned. "Daughter," he said, "leave us alone for half an hour, then you can come back."

"Did the Madam put you up to this?" the merchant asked. "It is just like her. You pitiful scoundrel, to come to me and ask me for the hand of my child. My degradation is complete. Are you in earnest? True, she has never seen you, and you are wooing her in the name of my bookkeeper. I see it all. This marriage shall never be, if I have to go to prison."

"I must have money, Mr. ———. As you know, they are getting suspicious of us over in England. We did not receive the last piece of sterling exchange."

"You lie, you scoundrel; the Madam gave you the largest part of it, and you know it. You are systematically blackmailing me. It is bleed, bleed, until I will be a pauper myself."

"How will you help yourself?" One word from the Madam and myself, and to disgrace you go. Make me a deed to the house I was living in and I will say no more about it. Your daughter shall go free. You are the owner of houses, stocks, merchandise; what is such a sum to you? Nothing."

"I will think of it and give you an answer



later. Will you sign an agreement to leave the country and go to Europe if I will sell the property and hand you over the money?"

"It will suit me excellently well, if you will send it in yearly installments. I will give you my address in Paris. How long will it take to sell the house and lot?" the Night Owl inquired.

"I have had no bids as yet. Or, if you would prefer it, I will fill you out a check for a thousand dollars; then you will not have to wait until it is sold. Does this suit you?"

"When can I get the check? Let it be so. I owe some gambling debts that are pressing me. Would it be convenient for you to fill out the check now?"

"Yes, sit down." While he was making the check the merchant thought of the money he had already handed over to the Viper. The thought of putting them out of the way by foul means was a prompting from the devil. With patient resignation he handed the Night Owl the money and dismissed him with a secret curse.

Blanche became impatient at the delay and entered. "Where is Harry?" she asked. "I did not see him go out. What did he say, and what did you say? Have you consented to our union, my father?"

How much he despised himself for the hypocrisy that made his life a living lie. He would



have given every dollar of his wealth to be a boy again—to feel that the little he then earned was the honest wages of toil. This noble girl at his side was a silent reproach to his conscience. He turned to her and exclaimed: “Blanche, he had no money to support you; he has reconsidered the offer of marriage and will wait, so matters stand as they did before this conversation. I will gladly give my consent to your marriage with Harry when the time arrives; so, go along, my child, I have some work to do.”

“How happy you have made me, papa. Somehow I did not love Harry, to-night. His very presence chilled me; next time he comes I will like him better.” She kissed her father good night and turned to see his frightened face staring at her.

“When she was gone the unhappy man moved quickly to the window and peeped out into the night. The moon flooded the lawns of his grounds. “I am sure I heard some one at the door leading to the back stairs,” he said. If he had peered closely into the deep shadows he would have seen the detective crouched low in the bushes that bordered the lawn next to the gate.

It was Thompson, the Thompson with the iron will, who never heeded fatigue or cold when a score was to be made. “Blanche got off easily,” he argued. “There is not brimstone enough in



hades to consume with everlasting fire this Vampire who suggested to the Night Owl the ruination of this noble girl. That scoundrel was going to marry her under the name of another person, and thus seduce her to her ruin. For Harry's sake, I could wish that this scoundrel had married her, but for the girl's sake, let it remain as it is."

"I am sorry that he is sending this Night Owl away to Europe. I do not like this breaking up. Pshaw! why need I fear; he will never go so long as there is a fat goose to pluck. I have his Paris address. He will be reached conveniently when I need him, and the Vampire, too, for that matter. What a night I have had to be sure. The wheels of justice must roll, and that which has been meted out so cruelly must be measured to them again."

"How wonderful is this sentiment called love. I am a scientist and the intuition that warned the girl that all was not well, never failed her once upon this trying occasion. There is a sixth sense that is more delicate than the materialism that surrounds our bodies. It is a part of ourselves—a sentinel on the watch tower of sensibility."

"If this wretched merchant knew what I know, how soon would the fabric of forced loans crumble into the dust, and the accuser become the accused. But he don't know it and must be



bled for the wrongs he has done. The pendulum must swing back. I must be vigilant with Harry, because Blanche has a stronger hope of winning my boy. This must not be. Claud loves Blanche; what a happy couple they would make."

"I must gain Harry's confidence in the matter of bookkeeping; nothing like black and white on good strong paper to bring forward as evidence when the proper time comes. I will be so glad when it is all over. One false step on my part would precipitate a stampede that would ruin all of my plans. The trial that will make or unmake this persecuted young man's reputation will be called up in two weeks, and I will be compelled to curb Claud's ambitious dreams, and bring out, or, rather, I should by some direct means, give the prosecution a hint of some damaging evidence that some one possesses. I use the words some one to divert suspicion from myself; evidence that will make these scoundrels wish to postpone proceedings."

"Claud is preparing his maiden speech for the occasion, but I will see that he has no chance to deliver the same. It is a masterly effort; for this reason it will do my cause more harm than good. He can wait; he is young; although he is poor now, the days will come when he shall hold his head as high as the highest hold their heads. I must give the Vampire close attention. She has



not met this merchant yet. To-night is the appointed time for her paramour to meet her in the park. I am sure he will not tell her of the check for one thousand that the plucked goose gave to him, last night. He will take all she has secured by blackmailing and be dissatisfied because it is no more."

"It is after office hours. I will see that Harry goes out to see Madge, then I will eat an early supper and lounge around the park until these miscreants arrive. The moon does not rise till midnight. I can get close enough to them because the shadows of the arc light will make black backgrounds for the staging of this scene. They will avoid the seats where the visitors mostly lounge. The more retired the seat, the better it will be for me."

He promenaded slowly along the beautiful walks, yet he did not fill his soul with rapture of romance. The couples that frequented this park were using the privilege of confidantes. The fact that the stars looked down upon them did not inspire any but a utilitarian feeling. Life in all of its earnestness was the mentor for future planning.

His keen sight caught the outlines of a familiar figure approaching. The white face was so distinctly visible in the surrounding darkness that he closed the space between them. It seemed to



the detective that the man had hidden his real skin behind a masque of phosphorescent paint. "It is not natural," the searcher after truth remarked; "if he is trying to be as much like Harry as possible he has overshot the mark. I must find some means to get into the good graces of some of the menials that make life a comfort to him. He is wearing a wax masque; I am certain of this, because he never goes out in the day time. Like the owl, he sleeps all day and moves by night. I must see him when his face is natural. Something tells me this is the most dangerous man that I have to deal with."

"Here comes the Madam, walking slowly as if she was in doubt, with a devil's brains in her skull and a heart of steel in her body. She loves this Night Owl with all of a woman's mad devotion. She loves him because she can use him to further her own ends. When she is done with him she will run a steel hat pin through his brain and no one will be the wiser for his taking off."

The detective waited until they skirted the row of hedges that was nearest the rustic lounge. They were satisfied with the inspection and could see no lurking danger to absorb the tell-tale words that passed between them. Mr. Thompson in his anxiety to hear what they said crept towards them. The swish of a bush startled them. Again they passed around. While they were far-



therest from him he passed into the shade conveniently near to the iron seat that was overshadowed by a tree.

"Did you accomplish the girl's ruin, as I told you?" The Madam asked this with suppressed emotion and waited for an answer. Her companion was silent. He had some twinges of conscience. The better part of man's nature rebelled at the heartlessness with which she asked this question. He told a deliberate lie to cover the payment of the check. By the light that played in shadows over her face the detective could see that the information gave her genuine delight, for she laid her hand upon his knee and continued: "We must put this lawyer out of the way; he has made us the chestnuts and monkey too. I was thinking it over and I find that he has adroitly worked this entire scheme to his own interest, and will come out on top whichever way the devilment turns, and he cannot be reached by due process of law."

"I wish this miserable business was ended. You can take his life yourself," he whispered, savagely. "I have one rope around my neck now, through a desire to help you. To change the subject, what did you do with the man you ruined? I would be glad to know, because I need money! money! and need it badly."

"I saw him and he handed me this check.



Have it cashed and give me a hundred dollars out of it. You can keep the remainder of this piece of paper. The fool has taken his old bookkeeper back again to become a stick to break his own head with. Harry will find that the books have been tampered with. The sinking of the *Jonna* and the attendant results have been cut from the ledger. The money of the stranger that you stole, and then told me that it was stolen from you, has also been removed from the folios of the index, and newer leaves inserted. It is neatly done, but a bookkeeper of this young man's ability will discover the change."

"I tried so hard to get this young man into my power. Unfortunately he was born good, and nothing would tempt him. I feared he would marry my niece and cut me off from this English estate. I hated him because he was so honorable and good. I have robbed him of his good name that nothing will ever restore. Suppose he is acquitted, the murder will be a devil to make weak humanity his uncharitable accuser. The truth will never be known and he will go down to his grave a victim of misunderstanding."

"You were not born good," she lisped, "and I have used you to my advantage. I have grown to love you because we are partners in crime. This play will soon be played out. With Madge's death I will be sole heir to millions. We will live



in Paris, and live like lords. Madge's father is dead; we have positive proof of this. I have made all of the arrangements to have Madge placed in an asylum where she will go to her death by the morphine route. We have the names of every retreat in the United States. If money can find her she will be found. My merchant friend is in a sore strait for means. The banks that have been loaning him money are gradually calling in their loans; his drafts on London are reluctantly paid. It is unfortunate this young girl should be out of the way just when we need the money most."

"Supposing you do not find her, what will you do then? The abduction of this girl from the asylum was one of the most marvelous happenings of all time. We have never found a clue to give us a starter. The disappearance of the tramp heightens the mystery, and the sleepy town is all agog. They have not ceased talking about it yet."

"You must quit spending money like you do, sir. If Madge is not found the merchant will go to the wall. In the meantime, we will get all we can out of him and save it—save it for an emergency. Why should I fear? Everything goes our way. Only one thing troubles me; it is the shadow of that husband of mine. I never know when he will turn up to kill me. He is insanely



jealous. If he knew of our love, your life would not be worth a song. He is with me in my dreams; I cannot get rid of the thought."

"What about this trial that is soon to come off? I hate these beastly courts; they make my blood run cold. I hate to see that innocent man stand up in the prisoner's dock on trial for his life, when we know that he is guiltless of such a charge. You and I know who did it, and we also know the reason for this awful crime that will never come to light. Harry will hang for the crime of another, and this will end the scheming so far as we are concerned."

"Who has the sheets, -or rather pages of the ledger that showed the murdered man's account; and who got that money? I have never seen any of it; it was a large amount."

"You got some of it," she whispered; "you were personating Harry. The money you spent was part of that found in the pocket of Harry's coat."

"Was that some of the money?" he asked, with some surprise. "They were new bills; I remember them well. How did they get in the accountant's pocket?"

"I cannot tell you now; this is one of the mysteries to be cleared up; you will know in time. We must part, it is growing late; remember what



I told you about spending money. We may need it, and need it badly, so beware."

They sauntered from walk to walk, and passed out the main entrance. The detective was released from his uncomfortable position and walked rapidly to the street and number of house where this Night Owl passed his days. The detective felt certain that the man with a wax face would not return before morning dawned. For this reason he stopped by the rooms that Harry rented and changed his suit for a threadbare, greasy suit that exactly answered the purpose for which it was intended. Thus equipped, he reached the before-mentioned mansion and touched an electrical button. When the servant answered the call, Mr. Thompson presented a card and stated "that an order had been left at his place of business for some plumbing."

The detective went from room to room, trying each gas fixture with a lighted match. Thus he went until he reached the sleeping apartment of this man with the wax face. He scanned the photographs closely for this face without the wax dressing. There were photographs and engravings that decorated the walls. By the light of the chandeliers he examined these works of art with the taste of a professional. One of these etchings particularly riveted his attention; it was an English landscape with its hawthorn hedges, its



stately park, and its castle so massive and cool with the sun's shadows to the east.

"Where have I seen the original of that sketch? Come back to me, my memory, for I need you now, where a whole world of possibilities loom up before me. Was this etching in this house when the Night Owl first occupied it, or does it belong to the merchant with his thousands? If it belongs to the man with the wax face it will give me a clue to his identity. How familiar the loved spot is to me; it brings back from the past a world of recollections. Ah! I must study this all out. This man is no underling in the business with his cool, brassy ways; he acts as if he was above the law."

"He is too intelligent to leave a tell-tale picture lying around, as the servants are careless. I will take advantage of this fact and make my departure known to them."

They were playing a game of poker. "Here is my chance," he thought, as he asked for a hand. By this means he ingratiated himself with the gamblers. He always managed to lose. What cared he for such a trivial loss when so much was at stake? He suggested wine, and never asked who bought it, or where it came from; it was enough to know that it was bringing to light secrets that were invaluable to him.

By dint of cautious questioning he learned



from the trusted valet that the house-furnishings belonged to the present occupant. The valet also informed the detective that they were to be shipped back to ——, England. They had been offered at private sale. The price was so small that the owner concluded to crate them and hold them in readiness for transportation.

“It cannot be possible that this Night Owl is the man I think he is. What a poor fool my landlady is! I see it all. If she is successful in securing all this money he will marry her. But how will this wicked woman dispose of that husband of hers? And if he is the man I think he is, he has a wife and family living in England. How many plans for the future they have dreamed. Sooner or later justice will be meted to them in a court where wealth and influence will be of no worth to them. I must see this man as he came from the hand of his creator.”

A foot on the stairway startled them. The game came to an end quickly. It was the master of the house. He merely glanced in and went on up the carpeted steps. The detective walked towards the back entrance, as if he were going out. He turned quickly after he had slammed the door and returned to the servants' room to look for something he had mislaid. The room was empty. It was but a step to the chamber above. Thither he crept on tiptoe. He could hear the



Night Owl moving about in the next room. The heavy portieres were costly. Twice this soulless creature passed through the prodigal foldings; twice or more he could have touched the concealed detective. As the room was dark the master lighted a match to find what he wanted. This was a trying moment for Mr. Thompson.

A blow from the detective would have stunned this prowler. In the confusion Thompson would have escaped for he had left a way open for his hasty exit. He knew that the fist that struck the blow would bring away some of the wax, and thus prove that his conjectures were correct. A better thought came to him in this emergency. He quickly glided to the other side of the portiere, while the Owl was feeling his way to the chandelier that hung suspended from the ceiling. In the middle of the next room the gas was extinguished before the owner had returned to the lighted apartment. Thompson was then on the darkened side.

"It is better thus," the concealed man thought. "One false step on my part would ruin my chances of success. Oh! I want you," he thought, as he watched his man leisurely undress. The cocks in the coops in the rear of the house were crowing lustily for morning. This slowness of the Owl's movement irritated Thompson, because some of the servants would be stirring soon and



he must be gone. At one time he concluded to play the part of a drunken man and trust to the cleverness of the domestics to shield him from detection.

The sums he had lost and the amounts he had gained would make his person a future consideration. His vigilance was redoubled as he noticed the half-undressed sport stand in front of the polished mirror and admire his face, in much the same manner that a lady would admire her face. If there was wax on his face he did not remove it but turned out the light and crawled into his bed. With a feeling of deep disappointment the watcher crept down the back stairway and stood in the

The hucksters and milkmen were moving rapidly from square to square. They gave little heed to the plodder as he walked along street after street. Now and then, some cook or housegirl would cast a sidelong glance at him as he made his way to the rendezvous, where he drowsily disrobed and went to his own bed without disturbing Claud and Harry.

It was two o'clock, p. m., when he awoke from his refreshing sleep. The young men were busy with their duties. He gave his mind full latitude and turned the wheel of memory backwards. The picture he had seen and the circumstances under which he had inspected the painting would not give up the secret. The masque of wax was still



a problem to be worked out. Thus he sat until the day was far in the west. He was aroused from his reveries by the entrance of Harry, the person he wished most to see.

"Sit down, and tell me how your second meeting with Madge progressed. Did you note any improvement in her condition? Did she seem to recognize you when you first entered?"

"There is considerable improvement," Harry hopefully exclaimed; "it almost brought tears to my eyes to see how helplessly she clung to me; how softly she smoothed my hair, just like I was a child, and wept when the matron led her away."

"God grant that the poor child be restored to her normal condition. I pray that her later years will be the restful years of her existence. There should be some joy come into her life to balance the misfortune that attended her earlier years."

"Shall I go there, to-morrow?" the accountant asked.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE MUTILATED LEDGER.

“Every day you can spare from your duties. By the way, Harry, you can be of great service to me in clearing up your misfortune. I know I am asking a great favor of you. There are certain transactions on the books of the firm that I would very much desire to look into. As it concerns your honor you should not for a moment stand in my way when you have so much at stake.”

“If I can do so honorably, command me. To tell you the truth, life is hardly worth the living. I am a sort of moral leper that every one takes the privilege of shunning. Claud is right: this world has its thousands of masquers who cover their morality with the thinnest of rags.”

“Harry, don’t take it so much to heart. Face the world like a man. If the world does not like you it will at least respect you. Do your employers return to the office after supper? I am not asking you to betray any especial confidence as an accountant. There is a mystery to clear up in which you are very materially interested,



as you will find out later. The mystery of the murdered man haunts me like a ghost. I wish to find out who this stranger (that you are accused of killing) really is. The only way to do this is by an inspection of his private papers and accounts that he placed in the vault of the firm you work for. I have the date that he went to the office and deposited a package of new twenty dollar government bills—twenty thousand dollars in all. Some of these bills were found on your person when you were arrested. Now, tell me, Harry, did you give a receipt for the special deposit, and did you take the numbers on the faces of the greenbacks? I feel assured, Harry, that you were too shrewd a cashier to receive such a valuable deposit without counting the same. One more question and I will listen to your answers: Was the dead man that lay at your feet the man that made the special deposit?"

"I did give a receipt for the package, but filled out the usual stipulation: 'At owners' risk.'"

"Why did you do this? Merely as a matter of precaution, because you thought the vault was not burglar proof?"

"No; I made this proviso because my employers have duplicate keys to that section of the steel safe where such matter is kept. Each has his own papers in the same receptacle."

"Which one of the partners uses his key most?"



Have you the key on your ring? I suppose it is a Yale tumbler lock, because the inner safe cost very much money. I have heard you say as much."

"Blanche's father; here is the key. It is a queer looking arrangement, is it not?"

"Would you let me make a sketch of it?" The detective asked for a piece of writing paper and with his knife he sharpened his lead pencil to a fine point, placed the flat key on the note paper and made a neat sketch which found its way into his memorandum book.

"Now tell me about the numbers on the bills."

"The bank-notes were evidently from the sub-treasury, because the stranger told me that he had deposited British sovereigns at their gold valuation, at bankers' rates."

"Then the numbers on this currency must have run consecutively, as this is a custom of the United States Treasury."

"You are right, Mr. Thompson, and I will tell you that I recorded the numbers and have them with my private papers. How those bills got on my person is beyond my comprehension."

"Did you hang up your coat in the office, or did you wear it during business hours? This is a very important inquiry."

"I cannot work with my coat on. This is my peg where I always place it. Gracious heavens!



you do not mean to hint that Blanche's father placed that money in my pocket?"

"You have answered my trend of thought; it is only a suspicion. There, there, don't take it so much to heart, my boy. You know the money was found in your coat pocket, and you know that you never carry currency where it is exposed to the manipulations of the light-fingered gentry."

"I never carried money in my coat that I can remember. But the thought that my employer put that money there to ruin me, staggers belief."

"The grind of humanity goes on, and wealth, or the mad greed of wealth, breaks down all barriers of friendship. I am glad that you see matters in their true light. Now you will help me go over those books that I may give you back your good name and restore to you what is your own. Now, Harry, one more question, and this is the most important one of all. Was the man in the mansion with his throat cut the same man that made the especial deposit?"

The young man grasped the detective's arm with a vice-like grip, and turned him half way round, as he wildly gasped: "Do you think Madge killed that man? Oh, the misery of it! She was standing over him with my knife in her hand. I took it from her to shield her from dis-



grace; you know the remainder. Oh! the pity of it all. I believe I am mad myself."

"Cool down, my boy; neither one of you murdered the man; I am sure of it. Only help me to find the true criminal; this is all that I ask. I am on the right track and with your assistance I will yet run him down."

A great wave of hope came to this persecuted man. A new life appeared to take the place of the old life, as he joyously clasped the hand of the detective and observed: "That I will assist you by every means in my power. You shall inspect the books from beginning to end. I thought that my employer was over-anxious for me to go that night; but how did he know that I was going there?"

"Easily enough. I found afterwards that you had been shadowed by a second detective. The hack you hailed was following Madge for the purpose of picking you up that you might play your part in this terrible tragedy. You were followed from this room when you went to the entertainment given by your employer. You were followed when you rushed away from Blanche like a madman, and the hackman did the rest. The same night I was seized and put on board of the whaling ship, and Madge was placed in a madhouse. You will admit that the job was neatly done. I



have the man spotted that shadowed you. I can begin to see the beginning of the end."

"What awful villainy, Mr. Thompson. Can such things be in this enlightened age? Who is the prime mover in this conspiracy?"

"That I cannot tell. You will understand it all better after a while; you know a detective must not tell everything he knows."

"This is the first time you ever told me anything, Mr. Thompson. Why are you so communicative now?"

"Because I want to assure you that you are innocent, and I want to give you a reason for asking you to let me see the books of the firm. The trial will come up one week from to-day, and it is well to be prepared."

The detective did not tell the prisoner that the trial would not be called; he did not tell him of the money and influence that would fix this crimson stain on an innocent person to shield the real criminal. The purpose of the detective was to stimulate the energy of the lawyer who was defending Harry, to stimulate the latter by the hope of a speedy acquittal and the restoration of the prisoner's good name; in fact, he wished to use them for their own good.

"Harry, you did not answer my last question; I will repeat it: Was the dead man the same man that made the deposit?"



"I was so excited that I could not tell you, to save my life."

"Would you know the man if you were to see him again?"

"I am almost sure that I would recognize him."

"Harry, if I should show you a picture of the man would you know it to be a fair likeness of the murdered man?"

"I am sure of it. Why are you so persistent in asking so many questions on this point?"

"Because it is the most important evidence of all. It will affect all of your future life. Trust me, Harry, and you will not regret the confidence that you now begrudge me. When can I go with you to the office?"

"Any time; to-night, if you wish. What you have told me has confirmed the suspicions that have taken possession of my senses. The truth that Madge is innocent has made me very happy, and I will help you right a great wrong, and God will bless you for doing so."

"Why do you not tell Claud what you have told me? He will be glad to share my good fortune."

"I cannot trust him to keep this information. Never by word or sign impart to him what I have entrusted to your keeping. Will you promise me to keep your mouth closed, good and tight?"



"Harry, have you seen Blanche, lately?"

"Yes; I dropped by there during the afternoon. She acted so queerly and seemed to shun me, and again was over impulsive. She regretted that she did not go to church with me. I never made any engagement to go to church with her. I believe this play at cross purposes is running us all crazy."

"Harry, would you marry Blanche if she were to insist upon it?"

"Are you crazy, too, Mr. Thompson, that you should ask me such a question?"

"I know, my boy, that Blanche is a noble girl. I feel that a sentiment of gratitude might perhaps wean your love away from the poor helpless playmate of your boyhood days. Persons don't see these matters through the same glasses. Madge has loved you with a passionate idolatry. She came to this city to claim your protection, and in an evil hour she fell into the hands of that unscrupulous aunt of hers. Since then all has gone wrong with us. But, cheer up, a brighter dawn is breaking."

"Mr. Thompson, why are you so solicitous of Madge? I can't understand it. I have no idea of marrying Blanche, because Claud loves the ground she walks upon. Have I not given you my word of honor that I would marry Madge, even if she has fallen. I am willing to trust to



your good judgment to clear my good name. If we are going to the office, now is the best time to go. Mr. —— has a business engagement with a lawyer, to-night, consequently we will not be interrupted."

"What sort of a looking lawyer is to meet your employer? Did you ever see this old Greenbags anywhere, Harry? It is important that I should be informed on this subject for more than one reason. If you will remember, he administered your father's estate; that is, if it is the man I think it is."

"Is this old ——, the one that used to practice law in the Village of F——? I thought I recognized him as he came into the office, yesterday. He must have prospered. He came in his own conveyance and was dressed in a suit of broadcloth. You remember how seedy he used to dress when we knew him, years ago."

"It is the same man. He has robbed you, my boy, and I have the double proof of it; so bear a hand, as the sailors say, and we will run him to cover."

The accountant went slowly down the steps of his apartment. He looked carefully around him. When he had satisfied himself that all was well he walked rapidly in the direction of his counting-room. The fire in the grate was replenished. The night settled down for rain. The time was



propitious for the detective to gain additional evidence.

The cautious steps of Thompson drew nearer. He threw off his waterproof, and while Harry unlocked the vault and safe he wiped the rain-drops from his beard. "Come on, the books are here; see what you can find that looks suspicious. If you can you will beat me as a professional checker."

"Is this the ledger that had the murdered man's account on it? You know that two years or more have passed by since the night of the murder. It cannot be possible that the same ledger would hold out thus long."

"By Jove! I never thought of that. Since you call my attention to this circumstance, I will go through the book, page by page. When the office was turned over to me, this ledger balanced. I have the trial balance filed away which is a check on the former bookkeeper's work."

"Show me the account of the late stranger that left the special deposit. It must be in the ledger that antedates this one."

The young man ran his finger down the vowel index, carefully. Again he called over the names. The name he wished to find was not among the number.

"This is astonishing," the accountant remarked. "There is no ledger that is back of this. I



don't understand it. I opened that account myself. Without the heading I will be unable to furnish you with the name."

"I trust you can do this, Harry. It is a matter of such grave importance to me that a further search will be necessary. Don't give it up; you must find this missing page. You will be accused of tampering with the accounts."

"You do not remember the vowel letter of the name, my lad? Put out the gas on this side of the desk and leave the one on the other side burn. Now push the book towards me and turn the leaves, one by one, slowly, Harry." For ten minutes the monotonous turning of leaves disturbed the stillness of the room.

"Stop! that will do. Let me examine this leaf, and the next. The paper is different, the watermark is different; the scoundrels have cut the accounts out of the book." He turned the pages broadly down and ran his dexter finger along the binding. "This is a neat job and it was done by one who understood the binder's art. Evidence in your favor. No bookkeeper in the world could have made such a change that almost defies detection."

"How stands the evidence now, Mr. Thompson?"

"I am bitterly disappointed," the detective replied. "Every trace of the missing man has been



removed from these books; also, the account of the whaling ship, *Jonna*. Have you any papers in the vault that will throw some light on this work? Do not hesitate to overhaul the private documents of your employers, for it is a duty you owe to yourself."

Bundle after bundle was overhauled by the two men. Not the slightest trace of evidence was discovered. "Here is a list of the numbers on the stolen gold notes," exclaimed Harry. "As I surmised, the numbers run consecutively. Such a transaction would be remembered at the bank. I went with the gold myself."

"How did this English gold come to him, in the shape of a consignment? He did not bring it over with him I am sure, and if he did the purser of the vessel that he came over in must know something about it. So cheer up, my boy; we will find the name of this man yet in spite of all of their precautions. Another question: Was that gold placed in the vault?"

"Yes; it was also a special deposit, for the reason that he was going to invest the amount in the West."

"How did it happen that he had so much gold? Was his sterling exchange cashed in English money?"

"If it was so cashed, I never understood it to be cashed in the manner you speak of, yet it



seems natural, for the sovereigns would be of little value as a circulating medium in this country. As the exchange would have called for sovereigns, I presume he was paid in such specie."

"In what bank did this transaction take place? Perhaps I can get a starter. Some entry must be in the bank where this piece of English exchange was entered. His endorsement and identification was a prerequisite of speedy payment." The next question: "Who was the person, or persons, that identified the stranger? This was no ordinary deal."

"One of my employers went with him to the bank, so you see he had no trouble on this score."

"Harry, I want to ask you the most important inquiry of all: Where did the bank get so much English gold? Such institutions do not often handle such stuff. The entire transaction has a very fishy smell."

"By Jove, you are right. The entire deal comes to me now. Madam V—— put that money in the bank, and the bank unloaded it on the stranger. I ought to be able to tell you his name, but I have had so many ups and downs since then that I have no memory at all."

"I will go, to-morrow, to the bank and see what I can find in the way of evidence."

"It will be useless; the bank has special in-



structions on the very point you speak of. It is a close corporation."

"Harry, being from the same village, did you ever call upon the Madam?"

"She always gave me the cut direct, and avoided me. I learned she was a dangerous woman, an adventuress that it was well to shun."

"You never lost anything by it, Harry. She is more than a dangerous woman—she is a devil. I have been on her track for months. Her game is almost played out. Some day I will tell you why she avoids you, but not now. You see how implicitly I trust to your silence. Do not tell Claud anything; my chances for success are in your keeping."

"You can count upon me, Mr. Thompson, and feel perfectly secure."

"I wish, Harry, that you could step around to the bank and get the endorsers on this particular piece of exchange. It would clear up a doubt in my mind, a doubt that baffles my powers of memory."

"Do you not think it would be unwise for me to ask for the information you desire? I am sure that my employer would know it in twenty-four hours."

"You have the name of the steamer he came to this country on?" the detective asked. "I might find his name on the register. This would



be a round-about way, yet it is better than nothing."

"I can give you the name of the vessel. I have a card that gives her sailing time, and the number of the pier. The card is in my trunk at my room. I was overhauling my effects, for Claud's benefit; some almost new suits I persuaded him to accept. He has given up ambition, his practice, and almost everything to serve me. Such friends are few, these degenerate times."

"It is growing late, close up the office, we will go to our rooms. I am disappointed with this night's work, Harry, but the fault is not yours. Give me that list of the numbers. It will be useful to me in the near future."

The detective followed the accountant until he reached the long stairway that led up to the rendezvous, and walked with a rapid gait in the direction of his lodging house. Fortunately the landlady was as usual out on a lark, as she laughingly expressed it. When he entered his room he found everything just as he left it. This circumstance gave him some uneasiness, because she was the most crafty woman that was ever born. She was no ordinary woman. She twisted men around her finger and left them in ignorance of her cunning designs. Human will was as plastic as putty in her hands.

He could not resist the temptation to draw



from his trunk the twenty dollar gold note that he had received in change for the board that he always paid in advance. It was like drawing a prize in a lottery. He looked first at the number on the bank note, then at the number on the list. A grim smile played over his face as he thought of the numbers that were found on Harry's person. The number on the Madam's money was the next consecutive numeral after Harry's last row of figures.

"The Night Owl put that incriminating money in Harry's pocket. He counted the bills down to the Vampire's numbers, and then gave the landlady a certain amount. That corresponds to the total that Harry is accused of stealing. The remainder was used by the firm, or gambled away in futures."

He stroked the gold note with an affection that seemed childish, because the evidence was conclusive in one direction. There was so much to nose out. "Where did all that gold come from? Who were the persons on the other side of the ocean that forwarded this large sum? Did it come from the English estate, and what had the stranger to do with the nefarious transaction?"

The detective heard the Madam trip lightly past his door; then he heard her tip-toe back and listen at his door. The light was out and everything was quiet in his room. Softly she tried the



latch and returned to her room. He dozed for twenty minutes. The strange feeling of some impending danger aroused him. The gas was escaping. He felt certain that he had turned the key to the stop. As he always slept with his windows open, the fear of suffocation did not trouble him. When he was satisfied that she was in her boudoir, he lit a match. The danger of an explosion was so small that this piece of imprudence became a necessity.

"What a cunning devil this woman is," he muttered. He crawled on his hands and knees along the floor to the corner of the room where the gas-piping was let into the wall. At this point the smell of gas was strongest. He ran his fingers along the surface. The dastardly act was explained. The steel rod was connected with a key that could be turned off and on by a person in the hall, irrespective of the real burner. The piping had been tapped at this corner joint, and the fatal gas was expected to smother the sleeper.

He knew that she slept late. For this reason he turned the gas off and slept soundly until morning. To allay suspicion he turned the key one-eighth of the way round and waited for the Madam to pass. The smell of gas caused her to rap loudly at the door and call out: "Mr. Thompson, your gas is escaping!"

"I wish to beg your pardon, Madam, for my



negligence; it came very near causing my death. Fortunately my windows are always up; it is a habit of mine that long years have only intensified. I know that I was not drunk. I must have been buried in intense thought to do such a careless thing."

He noted the keen look of disappointment that greeted this explanation. She bit her lips to keep down the anger that was boiling at blood heat, as she scolded him for his carelessness.

"Your gas bill will be heavy, this month, sir. You should have been careful and not go dreaming through life with all of your advanced ideas that are so much foolishness. What good is it going to do you, pray? Mope along, and let people run over you rough-shod. I am as ignorant as a horse, and I am proud of it. I have had my wits sharpened by keeping boarders. When it comes to getting along, I can hold my own with the best of them."

"I have no doubt that you are telling the truth, Madam; but give me my own little world that is bounded by human charity. All of the sunshine that comes to me I scatter broadcast, and the dark places shall be as bright as day. I wrong no one by doing right, and my conscience is a soft pillow to rest my head upon; can you say as much?"

"The world is my legitimate prey. I have not



one bit of human charity in my nature. I respect nothing but money!! money!! It is my God."

"You are a strange woman, and a terrible woman. There, there, none of your passes around me; you made me sick the other time. Besides, your mind is not strong enough to exert such a power over me. You forget that physical research is my most interesting study. Tell me, he asked, what would you do with me if I were under the spell of your enchantment?"

"Do with you? I swear I do not know. You are too big a fool to talk to. I have been making love to you ever since I have been here, but your brains and hard study have made you a saint, and I have no use for saints after your style; they are too stupid to live."

With a low bow he smiled an engaging smile and replied: "Please, Madam, do not kill me for differing with you on this question. Have I been any trouble to you since I have been here? You will know me better after a while. When the gas bill comes in let me know, and I will pay it. The same will be a good lesson for me and make me more careful in the future."

"I don't understand you," she said savagely. "You are either a fool for your sense, or a remarkable man."

"Let it be the latter and I will feel compli-



mented." He looked curiously at her as she hastened to the kitchen. "Yes, I am very sure that you will know me better when the proper time arrives. That is an awful woman; she was born without a soul; nothing is sacred with her, absolutely nothing. The grind of the eternal mill must go on until the debt is paid."

The detective was unusually quiet. It seemed to him that she wished to destroy him just for the pleasure of doing so. He had never wronged her, and never intended to wrong her. He was going to see that justice was measured to her with painful exactness. The incident of the past night made him cautious. For this reason he helped himself to such dishes as were passed from one boarder to the next.

After the meal was finished, he returned to his room and took from his pocket the order of the court that Claud secured for him. He scanned it closely to verify its correctness. "Now comes the pretty part of my work," the detective remarked, "for on its veracity depends the fate of Harry." He breathed easier when he had passed out of the limits of the boarding house. Leisurely he made his way through the crowded thoroughfare to the hardware firm where Claud had purchased the knife as a present for Harry.

"I fear that I am too late. The circumstances of sale are too far back to be remembered."



He thought this as he crossed to the showcase where a full line of cutlery was displayed. The ten minutes that he waited for the clerk gave Mr. Thompson the time to inspect this display. The knife was an expensive kind of knife. There had been originally three in the morocco case; two had been sold and one was left.

"Have you been in the employ of this house a long time? My reasons for asking such a question are, I wish to duplicate an order that was filled here, say two years ago. It was a fine knife." Then he looked carefully from one case to another; "something like this one under my thumb."

"We sold two of them about the time you mention." The clerk said this as he handed the article to the customer. "They are too expensive; razor steel, you know, cost us three eighty-five, wholesale; no money in them at the price marked."

"Would you kindly refer to your salesbook that day. I want to be sure of purchasing the same quality of cutlery. I have my reasons for being so particular."

"Certainly, sir; no trouble at all." In two minutes he came back with the salesbook and the cash tickets also. "Here is the first sale: sold to Claud ——, a friend of mine; it was for Harry Monteet, and so marked on the silver plate. This



is the only one that is left. If you will buy it we will make a deduction on the marked price. Are you superstitious about giving cutlery?" the polite clerk naively asked. "If such is the case I will throw in a nickel for the donee."

"Would you be kind enough to mark the name on the silver plate, and we will not quarrel about the price."

"We do not mark names on the articles we sell. I can give you the address of the firm that engraves all our ware. You will find them very polite and accommodating. I will say a good word for you on the back of this card."

When the purchase was made the detective waited for his change. During the interim, he quickly wrote the name of the buyer of knife number two in his memorandum book. "It is as I suspected," the detective thought; "but I will give him the benefit of the doubt until I make a further investigation. I hope the engraver will be so polite and communicative as the salesman in the store that I just quitted."

As he walked on the shady side of the street he placed this evidence in every conceivable light. "How did the suspected person know that Claud had made such a present to Harry? Again, why should the same individual wish to duplicate the order?" This duplication could be of no especial importance as evidence. Mr. Thompson



was puzzled. When he stood in the little engraver's shop, he still held the knife in his hand, and while he unwrapped the package he handed the proprietor the card that the hardware clerk had given to him.

"Is this the right place?" the detective innocently inquired. "This knife I wish to present to a friend of mine; it is a first-class article, and I want the job to be a first-class job. I esteem the person very highly. What will the charges be?"

"We charge by the letter, sir; how many will there be in the name? Here is a sample book of styles and names; make your selection while I wait on another customer." The sample book was open before the detective. What an opportunity. Here is a complete record running back four years. I hope that the customer will detain the salesman until I can trace up the two transactions. The dates of the sales were fresh in his mind, yet he looked carefully back through the pages just as leisurely as if his heart was dormant.

As he drew nearer to the date of the second purchase he moved more slowly. "Right you are, Thompson; the merchant bought the present and the same person had it engraved. Another criminal accessory to the murder. How these people's sins find them out. I wonder if the Madam hypnotized him also? Her victims seem to be numerous."



"Well, sir," the clerk asked; "have you made a selection? You have a number of specimens to select from."

"I think this will suit; how much will the price be for this script? It is plain and neat. I do not admire those elaborate styles."

"Harry Monteet!" the clerk exclaimed in surprise. "This is the third knife I have engraved for him. The bad luck in one knife is bad enough; think of three; it is enough to bring him to the very backgate of misfortune."

"Pardon me; I do not want that name engraved on the handle. Who is the young man? I only prefer that character of letter."

"Beg your pardon, sir. I used to know Harry very well; a finer man never walked the streets of this city. Such a pity he should have thrown himself away. That was a horrible murder that he committed. His trial will come up in a week or ten days. Fast living, fast living, will ruin any young man."

"That is a long time ago. I remember reading the news in the morning paper. It must be fully two or three years since the event occurred. What do you think his chances are for acquittal?"

"Poor enough, from all the talk I can gather. Even if he is innocent, his good name is forever ruined; so the poor devil had better be hanged, and thus end his trouble."



Mr. Thompson could hardly restrain the impulse to seize the offender by the throat and teach him a lesson in human charity. He did not reply but quietly asked this man if the writing in the book was the work of his hand. Upon receiving an affirmative reply, he said, in a low tone of voice: "Do you know the merchant that had the name of this young man engraved on whatever article he brought to you?"

"I certainly ought to know him, for the reason that I had Harry's position while he was in prison. Mr. ——— has placed this disgraced man back in the counting-room, and I, an honest man, must step aside to make room for him."

"Perhaps for the reason you have just given me; you have no charity for the unfortunate man. I am sorry for any man that does a wrong; I always remember that there are two sides to every case. Tell me," the detective continued, "Did you ever work in a bookbinding establishment?"

This question startled the clerk. He looked hard at the questioner. The calm, innocent expression of the detective's countenance reassured the young man, as he said: "Why do you wish to know?"

"I have some printing to do. As I am a stranger in the city I thought that you could direct me to a first-class house."

"A relieved feeling changed the brusque man-



ners of the ex-bookkeeper into smiling affability as he replied: "Indeed I can, sir; you can do me a good turn. The work will cost you no more and I will get a commission out of the order. Here is their card; be sure and tell them that I sent you; here is also my name and address."

"This is the firm that furnished the two extra pages of Harry's ledger, and this is the young man that was so loud-mouthed at the entertainment that my boy last attended. This is the one that Claud demolished on that evening. I must be cautious and move carefully in this matter. Perhaps this saint helped himself to the paper without permission from the firm, and did a very neat job. But he overlooked one very important circumstance, namely: the watermark on the sheets." When these reflections were ended he stood before the counter and waited his turn.

"I came to inquire about your terms. I am a stranger here and when I go home I want to get your most favorable prices for a set of books. I do not promise to fill the order here; and if it will put you to any trouble, consider the request as a chance bid that may be accepted."

"No trouble at all, sir; we will be pleased to give you our figures. What quality of paper and what style of binding do you desire?"

"I would want a good quality of paper; let



me examine some of your samples—something of a linen finish, and heavy.”

“Here is a line of goods that would suit me, I think.” He selected the heavy-weight paper that was used by the ex-bookkeeper when he cut from Harry’s ledger the two tell-tale leaves.

The binding and lettering figured separately. To do this the obliging clerk had recourse to some information in the office. This gave Mr. Thompson an opportunity to compare the watermark with the watermark on the two inserted pages. “How little circumstances will make great events! This uncharitable friend of Harry’s might have passed unnoticed, and given the detective no extra trouble. How important it is to say pleasant things and be just, even to our enemies. Now I can use him for his own destruction.”

“Do you ever insert leaves in an old ledger? I mean by this, supposing that I wanted to tear out some accounts that had been balanced a long time, and replace them with fresher leaves; you have heard the old saying that ‘economy is the road to wealth,’ etc.”

“No, sir, we do not do that kind of business; it looks bad. We sometimes rebind ledgers; it would be cheaper to have a new one made.”

“I thank you, sir; you will hear from me again.”

The detective folded carefully the sheet, where-



on figures of the bid were written in ink, as was the name of the firm. This has been a lucky day for me, the seeker of information thought, as he hurriedly entered the rooms of Harry and filed all of the papers away for future reference.

"I was careless, to-day; I should have changed my suit of clothes. The gentlemen were not very observant or they would have wondered what a professor was doing with ledgers, etc. The knife will have a fictitious name on the handle. I bought it for the information that I wished to procure. It has no further value to me."

Mr. Thompson waited for Harry to come in. A feeling of uneasiness took possession of his thoughts. He had been so busy for the past ten days that he had neglected Madge, and also overlooked the fact that Harry's visits might attract attention. Therefore, he met Harry with an expectant look that expressed so much.

"Come, tell me, my boy, how fares your wooing? Has Madge recovered her mind? Does she recognize you? Sit down; you look pale."



## CHAPTER XIX.

### MADGE ABDUCTED.

"Madge is gone," the accountant faltered. The matron accuses me of running off with her. She is very anxious for you to call at once. Poor Madge, she was doing so well; only a vestige of her malady remained."

This information made the detective shiver. He turned to his informant with a little gesture of impatience. He did this to hide the agitation that made his voice unsteady, as he asked: "When did this happen? I should have known this sooner; if we do not find her all of our labor will be in vain."

"I called as you wished me to call and found Madge so very much better that my happiness increased tenfold. Now and then she would ramble in her speech. This would quickly pass away, and she would be almost like her old self. I went by there to see her, this morning. The matron, with livid face, gave me a terrible tongue-lashing and accused me of running off with her."

Mr. Thompson could not inform the young



man of the seriousness of the situation, or the part that Madge's aunt played in the abduction. He realized the danger that threatened the unhappy girl. He knew that the Night Owl had personated Harry and would stop at nothing to encompass her destruction.

"It is all my fault; I should have given you my address each day. I am sorry you went to the agency to inquire as to my whereabouts. They do not know I am in the city. I hope the inquiry you made will pass unnoticed; don't do it again. I must go at once to the asylum and pick up some morsels of news. There is no time to lose."

He rapped loudly at the side door of the retreat and waited for his call to be answered. "How little judgment I displayed in not cautioning Harry. Some of the Madam's strikers have evidently been on guard at this retreat. They have noticed his repeated visits and thus have they turned me down on this part of the game."

The matron opened the door and with a quick movement of her finger to her lips enjoined silence. This mystified the detective. He followed her to the private parlor and with a disappointed glance at the visitor, she said:

"How will I ever be able to trust anyone! The young man that came to see my patient was a villain. He took advantage of my kindness and



persuaded the girl to go off with him. It was my stupid husband that yielded to the young man's wishes."

"Do not blame Harry; he had nothing to do with the abduction. You have been victimized by a scoundrel that is a double of the accountant. He came with a carriage, I presume?"

The driver of the carriage is in the office talking to my old man now. For this reason I made a signal of silence. Come with me; I will place you at a window overlooking the premises."

They crossed several halls and tip-toed to a small, grated ventilator. The superintendent, in a low, determined voice, was demanding the payment of some money due by Madam V——.

"You must come down with the cash. I do not want any more of your promises. This institution is run and owned by a stock company. They have charged me with this large sum. I am not able to lose it, as it represents almost a year's salary. The draft on London you gave me came back unpaid. I have had a hand in your dirty business; I am sorry for it. I know where you have taken the young girl. You have driven her there for the Madam's sake. I pity her from the bottom of my heart, because she will never come out of there alive; not that they will kill her at once—it may take months—opium will do it. My hands are clear of the transaction. You want-



ed me to kill her while she was here; you were mistaken in the man."

The detective did not catch the low, cautious answer of Tim as he pleaded for delay. He caught enough to know that Madge crossed on the ferry-boat, and was across the river in a private asylum that would be hard to find. The further thought came to him that Madge would be safe from destruction for one month at least. This would give him time to complete the evidence in time for Harry's trial that was fast approaching.

Mr. Thompson thanked the matron and hurried to the main entrance just as Tim was making his exit. The detective hailed a cab and slipped a ten dollar bill into the driver's hand and asked him to keep Tim's carriage in sight. This was an easy job, as the man that was followed drove in a walk through the streets that were less crowded. This menial of the Madam's stopped his vehicle in front of the city hall, mounted the steps and handed a folded piece of paper to a clerk in one of the departments; from here he followed Tim to his quarters through crooked alleys that defied the vigilance of the police.

"I am glad that I have located him. I can put my hands on him when I round them all up. He is useful to me in this emergency. Through him I will find Madge. I trust the authorities will not molest him at this time."



A thought came to the detective. This thought changed the direction of his destination. The Madam left a note with the clerk in the sheriff's office. I am almost convinced that it has some reference to the fatal knife. He quickened his walk. Instead of going towards the court house he turned sharply down to B—— street, where Claud's modest sign was fastened to the main entrance.

The young attorney was seated at his oaken table, with some legal documents lying flat before him. The cheery voice of the intruder aroused him from the absorbed attention that was fixed upon the instrument. Ah! Claud, do not burn the midnight oil on that famous speech that is to make you famous. My word for it, you will never be called upon to deliver this painstaking effort."

"Why do you think so, Mr. Thompson?"

"Because the prosecution will not be ready. The case will go to the foot of the docket. Another year will go by and Harry will be under the unjust cloud of public opinion. They will keep up the cry of 'stop thief' to shield their own murderous part of the transaction."

"Don't let my words give you disappointment; the years of your professional life are before you. You have been a friend to this persecuted man and time will bring its reward. Put on your hat and go with me to the Sheriff's office. Put the



Judge's order in your pocket; I mean the order that permits you to examine the fatal knife. When we get there, you direct the attention of the clerk to some object, while I scrape some of the clotted blood off the blade."

With a startled glance the lawyer exclaimed: "Do you think the knives have been changed?"

"Can't tell until I have the knife in my hands. Would you recognize the present that you gave our friend?"

"Without any difficulty; the nicks in the blade were made by opening canned goods. There were three near the point."

They stood at the desk unobserved. The clerk was searching for some court papers that had been filed out of their order. The keen eyes of the detective carelessly scanned the loose blanks that were evidently subpoenas. The grave look of the elder man did not escape the younger man's observation.

"Notice the half-filled blanks, Claud; it seems that I was mistaken in my conjectures." He did not inform his young friend that he noticed the familiar handwriting of Madam V—— upon the half exposed sheet of paper that was placed beneath a cut glass paper weight. A smile of grim satisfaction settled upon the detective's rugged features as he mentally thought:

"It serves this merchant prince right. He has



sinned deeply; let him receive the price of his inhuman conduct. The creature he has nurtured will be a rack of torture for this unhappy man whose sins will soon find him out. His daughter is the one object of his affection. He thinks she is marrying Harry. The awakening will be terrible when he finds that the man with the wax face is his son-in-law."

"I must, and will save this noble girl, who has been so loyal and true to my boy, and yet how great a risk I run. It is only Harry's kind heart that prompts him to stand by Madge in her great misfortune. At least, I will have the time of the wedding postponed until I have his double in irons. This is the Madam's brutal work." His train of thought was interrupted by the cheerful voice of the clerk, who said:

"Hello! Claud, what brings you here? I have not seen you for an age. You remember we were law students together. Neither one of us have, so far as I know, set the world on fire with our brilliant achievements. I never see that you have cases in court."

"Will, I am docketed for next week; for this reason I want to see the knife that was found in Harry's hand when the murder was committed. Here is an order from the Judge."

"It is all right so far as the order is concerned, but you cannot see it until it is produced as evi-



dence in court. You are lawyer enough to know this. I feel sorry for Harry, and do not believe he is guilty, but he might as well be guilty so far as Madam Grundy is concerned; he will never get over it; and who is brave enough to take the trouble to see the wrong is righted? The public will never forgive him for not being guilty after so much printers' ink has been wasted."

"I will see that Harry is righted if it takes the remainder of my existence. The public will tolerate him, and this will be a beginning; time must do the rest."

"Claude, it has impoverished you. All of your practice is gone and you have been out-footed by your schoolmates who will not appreciate your noble efforts. If you make a fresh start, practice in the civil courts. This criminal law throws one against the darkest side of human life. I used to have some tender pangs of sympathy, but now it is a regular grind where human beings are so much wheat for the mill."

"Will, you must oblige me, this time. The Judge's order stands between you and danger. For the sake of old times at college, do this for me."

"Have you the number of the package? It would take me a week to find the evidence." While he was going backwards through the dates the detective thrust a slip of paper in the hand



of the young attorney. The act was so cleverly done that the clerk did not suspect the stranger of having any interest in the request. Claud ran his hand in his pocket and produced the slip with No. 143,284 on it and handed it to his young friend.

"I do not find this number. Strange! it should be here. Ah! I have it." While the clerk was tracing up the entry, Claud untied the package, though not before Mr. Thompson had mentally registered the new number, and with an adroit movement scraped some of the blood into an envelope.

"Claud, I don't understand how these numbers could have been changed. This is a serious matter; tell me is this the knife you gave Harry?"

Claude turned pale as he examined closely the blade. The notches were there that he had made when he opened the tin can. "Yes, Will, I am sorry to see that it is the knife I gave Harry."

"Excuse me, Will, this is my friend, Mr. Thompson; I should have introduced you sooner. I was so intent upon this business, that I quite forgot my older friend here; he is not a lawyer, nor the son of a lawyer."

"Pardon the question," Mr. Thompson suggested, "do you not think that it is a clerical error? No one could have changed the number



without your knowing it. Has any one examined the knife before this day?"

"Yes; one of the detective bureau was here not long since."

"Did he have an order from the court?"

"I am sure of it; let me find it; here it is in the same pigeon-hole."

The detective glanced curiously at the scrap of paper, whose handwriting was wonderfully like a sample he had seen before. His quick eye caught a mark on the instrument that could not be erased; it was a grease spot on the upper left hand corner; the thumb mark was well preserved. "Good," the elder man thought; "this is proof positive that Tim brought the forged order, that is well calculated to deceive a person that does not see the writing often."

"Ah! Madam, one more point of the law that I will score against you. The agency never issued this order." With a courteous bow, and with thanks, the friends walked across the arched hall and descended the massive steps.

"Claud, you are sure this is the knife that you gave to Harry? Think over it carefully because the evidence will be valuable. You see that the subpoenas are all ready to serve; for this reason I must get my evidence ready."

Mr. Thompson went to his room, locked his door, and heated some water in his china mug.



He turned the gas up until a soft bubbling notified him that the water was warm enough. He washed two of his thin glass slides and placed some of the powdered blood on the under one. A drop of the warm liquid dissolved the particles. He sealed the edges of the specimen with wax and placed it on the stage of his microscope, adjusted the micrometrical scale, and graduated the light from the concave mirror below.

"I thought so," the detective exclaimed; "oval, nucleated, diameter one two-thousandth into ninety-ninth of an inch; no tendency to run into rouleaux; not biconcave, but convex; it is the blood of a perch."

"Crime overreaches itself. I can clear Harry with this evidence in my possession. Go slowly; do not precipitate a climax at this time. A false move now would be my ruin." Then a great thought came to him: "perhaps this is the real weapon that my boy had in his hand. I see it all. No man was really murdered; a great insurance swindle, and the man that was supposed to be killed is the man with the wax face. How could they get a certificate of burial from the coroner if the man was not really dead? I must see that affidavit."

He put his instrument in the oaken case and hurried to the coroner's office, where the clerk passed him over the paper. "This is singular;



every line and word is legally correct. They have evidently substituted a corpse from one of the dissecting rooms. The hand of the Vampire is behind all of this."

With a nervous step he walked to the office of Claud. His unusual brusqueness startled the young attorney. "Mr. Thompson, what has happened? I never knew you to be so excited."

"Claud, detectives do not know it all. Here have we been years in tracing up this murder case, and just as we go to trial I have found out that the man never was murdered; a huge insurance swindle. You must postpone this trial; your case will not suffer in consequence of the delay."

"I do not grasp the idea," the lawyer excitedly exclaimed. "Sit down and tell me all about it."

"I find by examining the specimen of blood through my microscope that it is the blood of a fish, and Harry is innocent."

"You don't tell me!! This will alter all of my line of defence; and to think that the poor boy suffered for the villainy of others and thus covered up a robbery. Well! well! Mr. Thompson, you are a wonderful man."

"It don't seem so wonderful when we think how much time we wasted in this investigation. To the point; you must throw the case back on the docket for my sake."

"When we can clear Harry so easily? Not a



bit of it. Thompson, we will annihilate them!" Claud took several turns in the waltz step around the square table until he stood before the detective, who good naturedly collared the young man, and said: "Don't be a fool and ruin us all. How do I know that the knives have not been changed? You remember the numbers were changed on the packages; so cool down, and postpone the case."

"This is another matter altogether. There is no end of ifs and ands in this business; I am disappointed."

"Suppose I should put you in the way of making four or five thousand dollars; would you then object?"

"You are joking; that is more money than I ever expect to be worth. Tell me about your scheme."

"Simple enough. The insurance money that has been thus stolen must be refunded. I will put all of the evidence in your hands and you can break the news to the company. They will pay you a good round sum for the information that is worth a gold mine to them."

"I will go at once. Such a windfall does not often come to a poor attorney who has struggled for years to right a monstrous wrong."

"You will do nothing of the kind, Claud. They will require the proof, then what will you say?"

"I was a little hasty. A cool head is worth a



dozen like mine. For this reason I will never make a successful lawyer. I would have gone to the office of the company and given them this valuable information, and I would have had a fool's pay for the trouble."

"Claud, you are young; your life is before you; experience is the best teacher on earth. I will tell you when it is time to impart to them this secret that must remain a secret. Not one word of this to Harry."

The lawyer looked intently into his companion's face and said: "How could such a dastardly crime be perpetrated on such a company? Some devil in human shape must have concocted this swindle."

"Yes, it was a devil in human form; that devil was a woman."

"A woman!" Claud exclaimed. "Mr. Thompson, have you the proof? She should be run down; she should be burned alive. What had poor Harry to do with this robbery?"

"Absolutely nothing; the boy was sacrificed. I cannot understand why she should have such a hatred for this wronged man. Seal your lips for the present, Claud, and I will guarantee that the reward will be yours."

"Who is to pay back this large sum of money to the insurance company, and what did this Vampire do with the illy-gotten gains?"



"Blanche's father," slowly responded the detective, who walked forward from the bookcase to the window, and stood for a moment amused by the dark mass of humanity that surged by in one continuous stream on the sidewalk below.

"Come, Thompson, you are joking; tell me that you mistake. But do not accuse the father of the girl I love of such a dreadful crime."

"I hope that I do mistake. My work must stand or fall upon the issue. If he is not guilty, no harm is done, because the secret is with you and me."

"Blanche will suffer for her father's sin. She is a proud, honorable woman. I see it all. This merchant was led astray by the wickedness of this Vampire. Others must bear the unjust reproach because the world is truly bad. I do not desire this reward, Mr. Thompson; I could not respect myself. This money would be a curse that would tinge with gloom all of my later years. The poor girl is unhappy. Sometimes she speaks so affectionately of Harry; then she dislikes him; I do not understand these changes that move from bad to worse, and you with your wonderful detective skill are deepening the sorrows."

"Sorrows that will make us better for the ending," Thompson reverently whispered. "Do as I direct, and your later years shall make amends



for the troubles of to-day, without the sacrifice of honor on your side of the case."

"Blanche does not love my chum like she should love him. I fear that I am apparently alienating her affection. I note the little marks of love that a glance betrays—the little suggestive manners that need no interpreter to translate their meaning."

"No one will blame you for the nobleness that must be a winning card with any woman." For a moment the officer of the law was silent; with his penetrating mind the position of the merchant's daughter became an axiom. The wooing of the man with the wax face was darkening the clear pool of innocence. This drifting away from the old love was a victory for Madge, though the means that accomplished this result hurt the noblest side of the officer's disposition. Again his manly resolve placed the tempter Satan behind him; with a firm resolve he stared steadfastly at the street.

He turned quickly to Claud, and asked: "Is the bicycle at the foot of the stairway yours?"

"At your service, my friend," answered the lawyer, who watched the strange man mount and move rapidly away. "There he goes, the grandest man that ever lived. Who knows what is in his head? Time will tell."



## CHAPTER XX.

### MADGE IS LOCATED.

"Tim is in a hurry," the detective remarked, as he sped along on his silent steed. "These rubber tires make no noise. That scoundrel in front of me has not cast one glance over his shoulder, but glances from side to side in a guilty way that plainly indicates that the trouble is thickening around him. He of all others is the man I wish to secure."

The pursued man reached the ferry just in time to dismount from his hack, and go to the farther side of the boat, where the passengers were scattered in small groups. Mr. Thompson took a position on the other side where he could note every movement of the Madam's confidante.

The culprit's wiry legs skimmed along the unused thoroughfares, with their unpaved streets and uneven sidewalks. Never in all of his life had Thompson walked so rapidly. This haste placed the detective at a disadvantage, and must have produced in the mind of the pursued, some feeling of fear. So intent was the hackman on reach-



ing his destination, that he neglected the usual precaution and turned into the gloomy portals of a very large building.

The pursuer, with rapid steps, ran into the arms of a policeman who was standing the distance of the asylum's front from the messenger, whose over-haste caused both men to gaze in the same direction.

"Look out where you are walking or I will run you in," exclaimed the big officer, as he picked his hat up from the dust of the sidewalk, and brushed it with his coat sleeve.

"I beg your pardon, sir. The offence was unintentional on my part." The detective was chagrined at this turn of affairs, because he would be compelled to explain the seeming haste that very much resembled a pursuit. He was sure he had become an object of suspicion when the officer said:

"Going at a two-forty gait, eh! after that chap? He is a slick one; there are enough counts against him to send him to the pen for five hundred years, yet he always goes scot free for want of proper evidence. No one understands his case, so show up and have an end of it."

The detective turned back the flap of his coat and displayed his star to the guardian of the peace,



who merely glanced at this sign of authority and passed to the other end of his beat.

"One moment, sir; what kind of a place is this? I am after Tim on another count. He is suspected of robbing a bank. I may get a pointer in there that will be valuable to me. When Tim comes out will you see that I am permitted to enter? Such institutions are usually private."

"It is an insane asylum and regularly registered. Everything seems to be conducted fairly well; at least I have never heard any complaints against the establishment. Certainly you shall go in, or I will know the reason why."

A sudden hush fell upon the officers as they watched Tim glide to the ferry landing. His little pea-green eyes roved everywhere. He had calculated the boat's time of departure to the half minute. The policeman rapped loudly upon the heavy door with his club. This summons brought to the entrance a weazen-faced attendant whose smirking manner was in keeping with his manner of speech. Perhaps the big star of the policeman had something to do with this obsequiousness.

"Show the gentleman your asylum, and be quick about it, or I'll know the reason why." With this admonition the officer walked away.

"Come right along, sir; I am pleased to know you. Ever been crazy yourself? No? Then I was mistaken; no harm intended."



"I never had this misfortune. I am a doctor of psychology and had charge of one of the finest asylums in Europe. There is something fascinating in the science. I have lived long enough to learn that one-half of the world is truly insane. This malady can assume a thousand different forms—money, love, ambition, hatred, jealousy; these are only degrees of madness, where the mind strains to reach its goal. Adverse circumstances balk the jaded steed; presto! you have a demented creature, ready for the asylum or the suicide's grave. Insaneness is a gradation of sanity."

"Psychology, sir; I never heard of such a thing. Is it bad? I suppose it is where people have fits and rave, or something of the sort. We have no such malady in here. Some new fad, I suppose, like theosophy. People are getting too smart to live. The world will surely be destroyed."

"I hope no such catastrophe will overtake us until I have visited your model establishment, which I am sure is run on business principles, or such a capable person would not be the manager of such an institution."

A broad grin of satisfaction rewarded the detective's biting sarcasm. Better this than too much sense. He continued: "I suppose you require prompt settlements for services rendered."



"The gentleman that just this moment left gave me a piece of exchange that will be hard to dispose of, as we do not go very often to the city."

"Perhaps I can manage this business for you, if the piece of exchange is not a large amount. What class of patients have you to deal with; those of the melancholy type? I mean by this, those who are mildly insane."

"We keep only shady patients."

"I do not understand your words, perfectly," the detective replied.

"Morphine eaters that the quality folks send here to be treated. They pay us well and no questions are asked."

"In other words, they pay you to hide evidence of disgrace that this habit brings to the various families."

"Now we understand each other perfectly. Come, I will be pleased to show you through these gloomy corridors."

"How dismal everything seems to be. I should think with the class of patients you have that you could make life more pleasant for these poor creatures."

"What is the odds to them? They are under the influence of morphine all of the time. We do not try to cure them. Death soon brings them happiness, and their relatives are thus relieved."



"As we pass along tell me the causes that produced these terrible conditions. This is a new field for investigation. I am delighted to meet with so polite a manager. Give me your name in full; when I return to my country you shall have honorable mention in the leading medical journal."

"That was a happy thought," the detective said, as the guardian stepped to the office for a moment. "He swallowed the bait, hook and all." When he returned, he handed the visitor his card, not that the degrees had been honestly acquired at any seat of learning.

"Be sure to get the name spelled correctly; I just dote on seeing my name in print." The small man ambled along in a self-satisfied manner, and explained the nature of each case, as they halted for a moment at each cell door.

Twice Mr. Thompson passed the cell that Madge occupied. A throb of indignation almost unmanned him; dirt and neglect, nothing more. "Would you mind it if I entered one of these cells or, perhaps, several?"

"Not at all; you see we do not guard them closely. The morphine habit is our best friend; they would not leave if they could."

"To produce this effect, you must increase the dose with a fatal result. Am I not right?"

"Entirely so; there is no cure for these un-



fortunates when once the habit is formed. Here they dream their lives away, dead to themselves and dead to the world."

While the officious little man repeated these words in a professional manner, his visitor was gazing wistfully at the dark corner where Madge was seated. The shadowy outline of her face was turned towards them. The whiteness of her skin was brought into a stronger contrast by the dark background. It is the confinement that produces this pallor. He comforted himself with this thought. Another fear came to him; her listlessness was marked; she did not appear to listen to what these two men were saying when it so nearly concerned herself.

Again the superintendent was summoned away. The nervous steps of this guardian grew fainter. In a moment the detective was inside of the cell standing by Madge's side. Her large, sorrowful eyes were aimlessly looking at him. "Madge, do you not know me? I am a friend of Harry's, and have come to this place to rescue you."

The name of her lover brought a quick gleam of recognition to her face which was instantly suppressed, then her frightened glances sought the entrance. "They have been punishing her. This is evident by the way she trembles." In his anger he called the curses of heaven on this Vam-



pire, who was a woman without a soul, a harlot without remorse. The frown upon his face made the poor mad girl shrink closer to the wall.

"Do not be frightened, my child; I am the person that took you out of the other asylum and will take you away from this one, if you will keep your wits and not give way to those bursts of feeling. We must say what we have to say before the keeper comes."

"Does Harry love me, because I am mad?"

"He loves you because you are not mad; loves you for yourself; he is grieving all of the time."

What a wonderful power love is; it has wrecked nations and kingdoms. How this unfortunate feels the thrill that shall yet restore her reason. Her future is in Harry's hands; woe to him if he be traitor to the trust. Yet I have sworn that the man with the wax face shall never ruin Blanche.

"Has Harry's trial come off yet?" The inmate pronounced these words so deliberately that her rescuer was thrown off of his guard and replied: "It comes up this coming week; can you save him, Madge?"

"Harry is innocent. He was in the closet when the deed was committed." A shudder convulsed her person. She placed her hands before her face as if to shut out the terrible memory, and relapsed into her usual condition.



"There! there! Madge; do not give way to those symptoms. Tell me, how do they treat you here?"

A cunning look came into her eyes. She looked cautiously around and then whispered: "They try to make me a morphine eater, but I love Harry, and he would not love me if I ate the drug. I have sense enough left to know this."

"Harry will be so glad when I tell him what a brave girl you are; keep up the deception for a little while; and you will yet be happy."

The girl drew from beneath her mattress a handful of parvules and dexterously emptied the morphine into his coat pocket. "They would whip me if I did not take them."

"Enough to kill a horse," the detective growled. "God bless you, Madge; you are a noble girl; keep the vials; it will be evidencé in your favor."

The tired head of the girl sank peacefully upon the pillow. He stepped to her side and gently raised the eyelids. "Thank God there is no morphine in those eyes." He held the empty vials in his hand and waited for the keeper to approach. "I have made a thorough examination of this patient; she must be far gone; see these evidences of this dreadful habit. How was her case diagnosed?"

"Crossed in love and tried to drown her sor-



rows by using this drug; she even frequented opium joints."

"This is dreadful. Who made this charge?"

"An uptown boarding-house keeper. I have it in writing; a wise precaution on my part, for sundry reasons." The speaker gave the detective a knowing wink that was not lost. This movement strengthened Thompson's opinion of this servile creature, who could be bought for gold. "Would you for a round sum of money give a certificate of the death of one of your patients?"

"I have done so several times, but the consideration must be worth the risk. There is a skin-flint lawyer trying to make just such terms for the girl that you examined, but the shady boarding-house keeper wants us to give her an overdose, and thereby put her to sleep forever."

"Then the lawyer does not desire her death? He only wishes you to issue the certificate."

"He wishes her out of the way. It seems that the case is urgent, for this reason he wishes the paper at once."

"What do you purpose doing?" kindly asked the visitor. "I have taken quite an interest in this young girl; consequently I will count you down ten one-hundred dollar crisp banknotes if you will turn the patient over to me. You can make both edges of the blade cut; issue the death certificate to the lawyer, and the girl to me. I



have a peculiar line of treatment for just such a case: if I can cure her, she will be well taken care of; if I fail, why then I will return her to you. This is a fair proposition, is it not?"

"Entirely so," the manager replied. "It suits me exactly; you shall have my patient with the distinct understanding that you will be responsible for her morals. Will you take her now?"

"Keep her here for the present. Should they desire proof of her death you can hypnotize her and lay her out; you understand me perfectly."

"Capital idea," exclaimed the keeper. "One question more: Why are you so particularly interested in this one patient? I have others."

"Her madness has reached a peculiar turn. She is just the subject that I wish to handle. If you do not feel like doing so, speak out; I can get patients from any of the asylums."

"Say no more; it is a bargain. I will do just as you direct me. The risk is great." The little man was busy turning over in his mind the danger that would follow a failure of the plans. The detective reassured him by saying: "Tut, tut! man, I live in Europe. We will go to the office and I will count the money. Half I will pay down, the remainder you shall have when the girl is delivered to me, and no one else. Treat her right and you shall not regret it."



The greedy, small eyes of the man danced as the crisp banknotes were counted and placed in his hands. His respect for the stranger increased as he noted the roll of bills that was secured with a rubber band. "Sir," he said to the visitor, "you promised to cash a certain piece of exchange for me."

"So I did; let me look at it? Why, it is a sterling exchange; I can use it at once as I have a remittance to forward."

The face value of the draft was laid before the delighted man, who rolled each package separately and thrust the exchange money into one pocket and the hush-money into the other. "Don't like to mix business affairs." As the visitor was passing out the host added: "Don't forget to make a complimentary notice of my efficiency."

This piece of exchange is a hundred points in my favor. At last I have the banker that has been supplying the sinews of war. It will materially hasten the end when we get on the other side of the ocean. If he has securities for such a reckless expenditure these securities must be forged. This information I hoped to secure through the Madam's lawyer. He passed the valuable paper three times between his first finger and thumb. The parchment feeling was a reminder of old England in better times. He folded it twice and placed it securely in the now famous pocketbook



that was to play its formidable part in righting a great wrong.

Mr. Thompson crossed on the ferry, boarded an uptown car and went in a round-about way to the rendezvous. He was fully satisfied that Madge would receive better treatment now that money paved the way for the little comforts that she needed. The delayed payment would insure this, so he dismissed this from his mind and strolled along in a contented manner that softened the ruggedness of his nature.

This pleasurable feeling was momentary, because he saw Harry with his cold, impressionable face staring ahead, looking at the back of the driver with an intensity that was painful. Blanche sat by his side, the same trusting woman. They did not look around, and as they slowly passed from sight he thought: "I must see how the land lays in that direction. I will go there, to-night. I must stop this courtship. Why should this pampered darling of fortune have all of the sweets of life, and Madge, the outcast, all of its bitterness? I have noticed within the last week that a coolness has come between Harry and Claud. I see the trail of the serpent over it all. What a terrible woman!"

That evening Mr. Thompson stood in the shadow of the shrubbery, looking into the open window of the merchant's costly residence. He saw



what a poor trusting woman Blanche really was. A chill had fallen on the household. The merchant, his wife, and Blanche, were seated at the late dinner table. The well-trained servants glided around while the meal was eaten in silence. When the meal was ended, the merchant passed behind the heavy velvet portieres and was unusually busy assorting the packages of papers that were neatly and systematically tied with red tape. Thompson's interest increased as this packing away continued.

"Something has stirred up this hornet's nest. That guilty man is preparing to go to Europe. Here comes Harry up the walk; I trust they will occupy the seat in the arbor, then I can play the miserable part of eavesdropper. How much it goes against the grain. It is for the good of others." The approach of the couple terminated this train of thought. How intently he listened. Perhaps the toil of years was slipping from his grasp and the vile actors in this play would scatter over all of the world. The voice of Blanche confirmed this surmise as she pleaded:

"I know, Harry, that you will go with us to Europe. Do not say no, because I cannot bear to think that so much space will separate us. We are all so unhappy here; I hope we will never see this country again."

"Who will look after your father's business



should I go? I ask this question in all candor. You know that your father's partner has quietly withdrawn from the firm, and drawn considerable amounts which has crippled the finances of the firm very much. If your father goes, people will become suspicious. Once rumor is started, you can imagine what will follow."

"Had he the right to draw these sums, Harry, and leave my father in such a position? This is what makes papa so cross."

"He took the right. The truth is, Blanche, that the firm is going to pieces unless your father gives his affairs more attention. I think it a very unwise move on his part."

"You mean his trip to Europe?"

"Exactly; what can I do when both partners are gone? This will be an additional slander. I presume that I will have another scandal to add to the charge of murder. The prospect is not flattering."

"Your books will speak for themselves. You can prove to the world that you are innocent."

"Yes, if you can catch the ear of the world. Truth wears leaden shoes, and rumor has the speed of light."

The eyes of Blanche filled with tears as she turned to Harry and asked: "Has my father been honorable in his transactions since you have



known him? I want you to tell me the truth, Harry?"

"It is not fair of you to ask me such a question, because I am not permitted to tell to others the business of the office. Please to think of the position in which I would be placed. Do not insist, Blanche, for my sake."

"I will ask one more question: What is the trouble between Claud and yourself? You are not so friendly as you were once."

"You ought to know, Blanche, since you wrote this letter." At the same time he passed the missive over to her, and looked frigidly at her.

"I wrote a letter, Harry? You have taken leave of your senses. Let me see it. A flush of indignation mounted to the roots of her hair as she slowly perused the contents, then with a fine scorn that was withering, she turned squarely around to her companion and said: You think so meanly of me after knowing me all these years? I have not deserved this at your hands."

A feeling of intense meanness overpowered Harry as he saw by the light that streamed through the open window, the tears slowly trickle down her pale cheeks. "Forgive me, Blanche; I am a brute to even harbor such thoughts. Some evil destiny pursues me relentlessly. It rises up like a specter everywhere I turn. I don't understand what it all means. I have never wrong-



ed a living soul, and this forgery (for it must be one) has embittered Claud, who has stood by me like the noble soul that he is. Now that I need his services most this letter has done its malicious work and we are friends no longer."

"Why not go to him at once, and ask him what it all means? If friends are truly friends, the misunderstanding can be explained. If you are in the wrong, you should certainly not be ashamed to be told of it; if you are in the right, you should by all means have the opportunity to defend yourself. This is a clever forgery. I could almost swear that it is my writing. I do not understand the motive for writing such a communication."

"I will forgive you, Harry, this time, but never accuse me of such a terrible deed again. I am bewildered at the change in my father, at the change in you, the change in Claud; we are all working at cross purposes, and all of us so unhappy."

He could not control the emotions that impelled him to press this noble girl to his heart. It was a jewel that he wished to wear there forever. The suffering of Madge stood up like a specter before him, and with a quiet good-night, he passed out of the gate.

This noble girl slowly walked to the house and sought her room. She fully understood the situation of her lover, because he was too honor-



able to deceive her. Right well she remembered the parting at the carriage gate, when Harry rushed madly down the street, pursued by the phantom of opinion. It was his first lesson; others had come to him—such sad, sad lessons! How they had changed his once joyous nature and made him suspicious of every person! The littleness of life was the last lesson of all. He was her Harry, and would be forever. She was not jealous of the mad girl. Thus she laid her tired head on the pillow and wept.

Thompson arose from his cramped position. With his coat sleeve he brushed away some truant tears, and muttered: "Blanche must never know of her father's dishonor. He will not go for a week. This will give me time to act promptly. He will not go till after the trial, because he is summoned as a witness." He picked up the letter that they had overlooked and growled: "The Madam wishes to deprive Harry of counsel, and thus lessen his chances for acquittal, fool that she is. She is rushing on to her destruction. I will put the letters on this page, on the stage of my instrument, and the truth will be revealed." He made his way to the gate-way, his mind filled with the grand woman that made him better for knowing her.

The Madam was absent from the house most of the time. Boarder after boarder had dropped



by the way, not on account of any physical weakness, superinduced by lack of nourishing food. That close attention to business that makes such an institution a success was absent, and so desolately absent that the house was rated as fourth-class. Leaf after leaf had been removed from the long table until it became a family concern.

The indifference of the hostess puzzled him. He was still more puzzled by the parsimoniousness of the menu. He had been studying her for days. Some extreme exultation turned her thoughts in a dozen different channels. An air of independence that was not natural made her indifferent to the welfare of her patrons. He ate his cold potato, grits and liver, with a hungry relish and went to his room, placed his hat over the keyhole and adjusted his low-power objective. "It is as I thought," he whispered; "she has gotten hold of one of Blanche's letters. She has traced these characters with a soft pencil and filled them in with ink. It lacks strength of purpose. The criminal sticks out in every letter and line. Wrong-doing reaps its own reward." He had hardly placed this additional evidence in his pocketbook and removed his hat from the knob, when a soft rap on the door was followed by an invitation to enter.

"Well, my silent cavalier, I have not seen you for an age. Somehow we always miss each other;



you are going while I am coming, and I am going while you are coming. What do you do with yourself? ”

“ I suppose that this question is one of your pleasantries. I do not ask you how many peas you put in the soup, or how many pints of water you put in the milk, or how often the hash is warmed over, or—or—”

“ Stop ! stop ! I shall pay you for this. I will put the same potato at your place, the warmed-over steak that several have tried in vain to demolish, the same rice pudding with the six big raisins in it, the dish of beans, remnants from a dozen plates.”

He threw up his arms with a gesture of despair and meekly exclaimed: “ Don’t! don’t! I surrender; I am down.”

“ I will pardon such audacity if you will promise to take me to see Boothe play ‘ Fransisca de Remine.’ I have seen it twice. There is a horrible fascination about the play that charms me; it is so awfully human.”

“ I cannot take you, to-night, because I am going to sit up with a sick friend. To-morrow night, I shall feel honored if you will accompany me.”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### TIM VERY ILL.

“You will be too late; this is the last night. Say, are you a doctor? I have a friend that is sick enough to die. He has served me faithfully for years; I cannot see him die for want of medical attention.”

“Why don’t he go to the hospital? I am not a regular practitioner; they would arrest me for practicing without a license. There are plenty of doctors that will be glad to serve you.”

“This is a peculiar case and one where tact is needed. It is in the slum quarter of the city where no doctor would go.”

The detective was silent for a moment; the thought came to him that the woman was pre-meditating his death. Reassurance came with the afterthought, as he replied:

“You ask me to go on an errand of mercy with a prospect that my life will be endangered? Certainly the prospect is not flattering. I would strain any reasonable point to oblige you but really



you ask too much. If you will accompany me on this errand of mercy I will go."

"I would not soil my skirts by walking on these back streets. You would be doing me a real service; please be the good Samaritan for this once."

"How will I find the house, the street, the number? It is not a pleasant undertaking to make inquiry where every man suspects every other man, and one may get for the asking a knife stuck into his ribs in a very inconvenient spot."

"If you will go, I will find the means of getting you there. The case is urgent. Will you go? Say either yes, or no."

"I will run upstairs and get my medicine case and be ready to go at once." He well knew who the sick man was, but how he had so completely outwitted the Madam was one of the unsolved problems that he was compelled to give up.

When he returned, the Madam was walking the carpet with nervous steps. Every now and then she would peep out of the window as if she was looking for some one. She understood the signal, and turned to the would-be doctor with a charming smile and said: "The carriage is waiting; I assure you the visit is a worthy one and God will bless you for it."

He did not appear to notice the fact that he



entered the hack in the narrow side alley. His mind was filled with the importance of this visit, to him, if his reasoning was correct. Tim was the pivot upon which turned the weight of evidence. He sat well back in his seat and drove many squares before he reached the roughly-paved streets that were familiar to him. The driver was cautious and did not approach the house nearer than four squares. When he alighted a small boy was waiting, whose thin, piping voice whined:

“Much’l er giv, Mister?”

He slipped a new quarter into the little fellow’s hand. It had a magical effect, for the boy trotted in front of him and every now and then the youthful guide would steal a sly glance at the money and move forward with a broader grin on his face.

“Right in here, sir; my name is Bob. This is the place.” When he had said thus much he darted down a narrow alley and was out of sight in a moment. He was sorry he had given the boy a quarter because the little street arab would tell others; then there would be no end to the annoyance, not to speak of the notoriety the act would create.

The darkness of the narrow passageway was not reassuring. He placed his hands on either side of the greasy plastering and groped to the farther end. He knocked four times, which was



the signal that the hackman gave him. The door was opened just wide enough to admit him. Then it was closed and bolted. He could see that a woman was bending over the bed of a sick man. The dim outlines were reflections from a shaded lamp, whose smell was stifling. He sat by the bed on a low stool, and lifted the shade high enough to see that the sick man was Tim, his old friend Tim, the muchly sought-after Tim.

The features of the patient were drawn with suffering. His skin was dry as powder; fever was devouring him. The voice on the other side of the bed asked: "Is he very sick, doctor?"

"His condition is not favorable, yet I have had worse cases."

"Will he die, doctor?" This was said in such a pleading tone that the detective's heart was touched. Something in the voice arrested his attention. He turned up one side of the shade. This movement gave him a full view of the nurse's face. His hand trembled visibly. Fortunately his face was in the shade. Her anxiety for Tim caused the nervousness to pass unnoticed.

It was Minnie, the shop girl, that knew more of Madge than any one, and whose reticence was so annoying. "What a wreck of womanhood," he mentally exclaimed. "Dissipation and vice soon finish all that is noble in man, or woman; it's always down, down, but never up. This poor



woman could tell him that which he wanted most to know." He buried the question in his soul because Minnie would be suspicious and defeat the object of his visit.

"Go and lie down; you are worn out with nursing. Is there no one to help you? He will be sick some time; the fever must run its course."

"Doctor, no one has any use for an old run-down shoe. There is little charity to expect when one is poor."

"Is he your husband, Madam?"

"Not exactly; we are living together; the ties of poverty bind us and misfortune has strengthened the bond."

The detective sat by the side of the sick man and watched his irregular breathing. He placed the bulb in his mouth. The fever had run up to one hundred and two, while his pulse was eighty—a bad sign; it would be better to let him die, but for Minnie's sake I will bring him around all right. I have use for him. He shall turn state's evidence. These thoughts were interrupted by the restlessness of the woman, whose soul was bound up in this wily criminal.

He opened the door softly. She had not undressed, but was lying across the bed, tossing and moaning in her restless sleep. He dropped some colorless drops into a dirty spoon and aroused her. "Take this dose; it will make you sleep, and you



will feel refreshed. Your old man is not going to die. I will help you to nurse him back to health."

How cheering the words sounded in her ears. Her gratitude was so real that it brought tears to his eyes. "Oh, Doctor," she exclaimed in pathetic tones, "I would kill myself if he should be taken away from me. He has been so good to me, and I have sunk so low in the scale of humanity that I despise myself. We have lived a strange life. Sometimes Tim would be flush, then again he would be hard up, and thus we have lived. I know that he is wanted for various crimes, but he is mine, because no one else on earth would want him, and I suppose I am his, because no one else would want me."

All of the manliness of his soul was touched by the heartfelt appeals of this poor, fallen creature. "I will stand by you; no harm will come to your old man; take this dose and you will feel better." Gradually the tired head sank lower on the pillow and she was asleep. Her regular breathing assured him of this. He stole back to the bedside of the criminal. The dose he had prescribed worked like a charm; the flush of the face was not so deep. It was a mean thing to do, but the exigencies of the case demanded this petty meanness. The great game of life and death was at stake. Alone and single-handed he



had fought a combination backed by wealth and influence. Resolutely he prodded the mattress of Tim's bed and turned the patient over several times. The unusual thickness of the bed in the middle did not escape the sense of touch. He ran his hand under the sleeping man and pulled from beneath a stout manilla envelope that was greasy and dirty. The oiled silk within preserved the contents perfectly.

He removed the narrow red strap that kept the package together and examined each paper at a time.

The detective rubbed his hands in a vigorous manner as he softly said: "Yes! yes! my hearty, you are not a beggar with all of this wealth. Here are the government bonds that the agency is tracing. I will take the numbers in my book. Here is the missing package of money that they accused Harry of stealing—all but the banknotes found on Harry's person." The detective had all of his evidence filed by dates. He secured the list of numbers that he made in the boarding house. The number of the twenty dollar bill the Madam gave him for change was also here, but the note was absent, because he was keeping it for a souvenir in the self-same pocketbook.

"Here is the evidence of the sinking of the Jonna. The sheets that were so cleverly cut from the ledger. Claud must have this and secure the



ten thousand dollars. I am sure the Insurance companies will willingly give this amount to recover seventy-five thousand. Ah! there is Blanche, poor girl. I will not see the rugged fine head droop in shame for all of the money on earth. Here is the duplicate of Harry's knife, with stains of blood on the blade." Then his thoughts flew back to Madge, and the spasm that overwhelmed her when he spoke of the murder. "My God! am I putting a rope around the neck of the persecuted girl?" The truths in this case seem to be hard to unravel, and time is pressing me sharply.

"Here is a package of letters from the Madam, and some from the merchant. What does it all mean? Tim is blackmailing them. He asks twenty-five thousand dollars from both to surrender this terrible evidence. I see now why Tim has not been arrested. I cannot let this envelope go. This package of letters of the Madam's will give me an inside view of her devilment and tell me of Madge."

He had timed the fever that was subsiding. Minnie was stirring. He took from his pocket a blank sheet of note paper with no watermark, no die mark, and wrote: "I leave with your nurse one thousand dollars in assorted bank bills. Fly, because I have bought the evidence that you concealed under your mattress. You will be watch-



ed. If you do not leave the city within twenty-four hours you will be sent up."

"Well, my good woman, your old man is all right. He will be up and about by dinner time, so I will bid you good morning. Give these doses as I have directed and follow them implicitly if you value the protection of your protector."

The dawn was breaking grayly in the east when he passed out of the side door and picked his way to one of the great thoroughfares. The fish mongers and milkmen were too busy to notice the patient plodder as he entered his boarding house and quietly went to bed.

A gentle rap at his door awakened him. He hastily put on his clothes and opened the door. The troubled face of the Madam saluted him with: "How is my man you went to see?"

He has a fever and will be up in a few days. I left him resting comfortably. It is as much as a man's life is worth to go into such a locality."

"Do you think he will die?"

"Yes, if he lives long enough. Go and warm over my breakfast and I will tell you more. Why are you so interested in this person? Does he owe you for back board? Bad plan! bad plan! to trust anybody."

There were two anxious persons interested in Tim. One was the Madam and one was himself, but the reasons for being anxious differed widely.



Perhaps this episode would bring disaster to his case. If he was hasty, it was the evidence that tempted him. The breakfast was unusually good. When the meal was ended he hastened to change his clothes and hurry to the slums. If the Madam met Tim the game was up and the covey would scatter to the ends of the earth.

With these thoughts in his mind, he peddled buttons, suspenders, shoe strings, and paste jewelry in the immediate vicinity of Tim's dwelling. He waited for three-quarters of an hour for some signs of life, and made bold to rap on the door. No answer to knock number one. He rapped several times and impatiently opened the door and entered the sick man's room. The bird had flown. A great sigh of relief escaped his lips as he picked up a note directed to an unknown friend. Another blunder, the detective acknowledged. The note was pathetic and read as follows:

"God bless you, I know who you are by the writing. When this falls into your hands we will be miles away. God be good to you as you have been good to us.

Signed,

"Minnie."

"Cast thy bread upon the waters," he repeated softly, "and it shall be returned to you." A contented feeling made him whistle softly as he



closed the door and waited for the Madam to come. She was also disguised, but so indifferently that a professional costumer would have laughed at this effort to deceive. The detective squatted flat on the shady side of the sidewalk and watched her as she knocked, timidly at first; then she rapped with more vigor, then threw back the door on its hinges in a half uncertain manner that indicated fear. She passed along the narrow hall and was gone fifteen minutes when she made her exit, thoroughly overcome by the disappearance of her confidante.

He surmised that she would return to her home and change her thin disguise for a street costume. The watcher sauntered leisurely along, offering his wares to those who did not care to buy. When he cleared the slum streets, he quickened his steps, boarded a car, and alighted some distance from the residence of the mysterious man with the wax face. From the movements of the Madam he would judge of the seriousness of the situation.

Within an hour this conscienceless woman was knocking at the front door of the Night Owl. The imperative manner of knocking brought a servant to the entrance who was not surprised at the visit, or the time of day when the visit was made.

Without waiting for excuses, the excited wom-



an pushed by the well-trained servant and disappeared within the gloomy hallway. The information she gained from the inmate quieted her nerves. A placid look on her face was so much hope for the patient watcher, who plucked up fresh courage.

Mr. Thompson thereupon turned his footsteps homeward to prove the nature of the blood stains on the blade of knife number two. He sat for full two hours in his comfortable rocking chair and reasoned with his own thoughts. "Why were the knives changed? I can see no cause for such a proceeding. The real knife would have been better evidence than the one in the sheriff's office. Why was the blood of a fish substituted for human blood?" The more he thought the more baffling the puzzle became.

The mistress of the house walked into his room without knocking. A shade of anxiety was traceable on her face as she whimpered: "Did you make another visit to my friend, and if so, how is he doing?"

"I made no other professional visit in that part of the city and do not expect to go again, even if you should offer me one hundred dollars. The man is in no danger. He will be out during the day, so do not borrow more trouble than you can pay back. Bad plan! bad plan!"

"Would you go if I asked you to go, for sweet



charity sake?" While she made this remark she gazed intently at the face of the would-be doctor. The calm, grey eyes looked steadfastly back at her, look for look, stare for stare.

"Did you know that he escaped?" She asked this with bated breath.

"Then he must have been out of his head. He was too sick a man to go so soon. The time for the fever to wear itself out was eleven o'clock. Did you see the nurse; perhaps she has moved him to a neighbor's house."

"I did not see anyone. The rooms were vacant. He has made his escape."

"Why, Madam, do you use the word escape? Is he a criminal from justice? And you would get me into trouble by making such a visit? Fie on you. I judge that you are not very charitably inclined. Am I right in this character sketch?"

"I do not remember of giving any one a cent in my life. The struggle with the world has been so constant that it left me little room for charity. I am a soulless woman and try to reap where I have not sown."

"What is the nature of the crop you harvest? It must be an evil one. I cannot imagine a human being without some human charity; it is horrible to think about. Perhaps the trials and tribulations of a boarding-house keeper have ruined a naturally fine disposition."



"Disposition, fiddlesticks! Here is a young man to be tried for murder, Saturday. What does the world care whether he is hanged or not? A few days of excitement, columns of the morning editions of the papers and presto! some startling event crowds this trial to the wall, and people forget that such a person as Harry Monteet was ever born."

"Give me the details of the murder. You know that insanity is my pet theme. One person never murders another who is not insane himself. It may be jealousy; it may be robbery. Be good and tell me all about this case you speak of."

"When she came to the latter end of the details and spoke of the tableau, he watched her with a fascination that almost hypnotized the listener. His grey eyes flashed with animation as he said: "They will hang this young man on such evidence? It is weak as water."

Her glances fell before the honest look of her star boarder as he continued: "Who was the man that was murdered, and where is this mad girl?"

"I do not know; I had nothing to do with the murder. The man that was murdered was a foreigner—an Englishman, and wealthy, so I have been told. I knew the young man that committed the deed. He used to be a good, steady



boy in the village where we lived, but he came to the city. Fast women and gambling were his ruin. So many young men that would make good farmers drift to commercial pursuits, only to make spendthrifts. It is very sad, is it not?"

"Yes, it is very sad." He breathed a deep sigh as he said these words. The sigh was so marked the Madam did not know whether it was real or assumed. So far as he was concerned it was assumed. "This hypocrite," he mentally exclaimed, "she plays the saint to mask the Devil. She has sin enough on her shoulders to send her to the bottomless pit for numberless ages." While these reflections were on the detective's mind, the lady in question was staring at him as one entranced. He quickly recovered his spirits and asked: "What had this mad girl to do with this terrible deed?"

"When they rushed in they found the young man standing over his victim with the bloody knife in his hand. The girl fainted. When restoratives were applied her reason was gone; but you will see a full account of it in the daily papers."

"You told me when I first came to board with you that this young girl was your niece? You knew both of them in the village. It must be a case of jealousy. I should so much like to see



this patient. I can give no other reason for this murderous act, can you?"

While he advanced these opinions, he kept his eyes focused on the guilty woman. The constant strain on her nervous system by this cross-questioning showed in her countenance. She was going to pieces. For this reason he closed the conversation by saying: "I shall read the papers carefully for the motive."

She passed from his room, feeling heavy-hearted. Now that the trial was near, her stock of overconfidence was being diminished. She dreaded the witness-box. The wily lawyers might tangle the thread of her evidence and criminate her in a way that would be horrible, so she went at once to her lawyer for coaching. Mr. Thompson arranged his fine instrument and went through the usual tests for human blood. "It is sure enough blood," he whispered, "and on Harry's own knife." Then a thought came to him. "I see it all. They will weaken their own evidence that they may leave a doubt in the mind of the jurors, and thus nolle prosequi the case. Harry will be under the bane of the law with no power to act."



## CHAPTER XXII.

### RETRIBUTION.

He put up his instrument, glanced at his watch and remarked: "It is time the steamer was at the pier. I must be there when she lands." The view from the wharf was cheering to his sailor heart as he watched the big, brown-hulled steamer slowly move up to the pier, towed by a tug from whose smoke stack issued a long black wake of dense smoke. As she came nearer he could see the eager faces peering landward, the nervous preparations that anticipate a scramble for the bridge, the examination of baggage, the eager greetings, the babble of tongues. The friend he met walked leisurely from the steamer. He looked carelessly around until his eyes rested on the right man. They shook hands just as if they had parted but yesterday and walked to the apartments of Harry.

"How is the case progressing? I received your cipher despatches up to a certain date. I judged that nothing unusual has happened."

"Nothing worth mentioning," the detective



replied. "I have had a hard time over here. Upon several occasions the covey of birds was about to scatter, but I have them well in hand now. They are restless on account of the approaching trial. The only thing that puzzles me is who the stranger is that was murdered. He was an Englishman, and he was wealthy. By Jove! I have it. I will take a peep at the leaves that were neatly cut from the ledger."

His hands trembled as they removed the string from the package that he bought from Tim. A deathly pallor came over his face. He could not speak. He passed the sheet over to his companion, who calmly remarked: "It is a righteous judgment; 'The mills of the gods grind slowly.'"

When Thompson recovered his composure he quietly remarked: "You must return by the next steamer; issue the notices as soon as you arrive, because times are uncertain. We have no time to lose. I will see that they are delivered. I will have your meals sent here until your departure. I have a number of disguises here; you are about my size; any of them will fit you. I want you to go with me to the residence of the man with the wax face. I have my suspicions who he really is. You know the man better than I do. He is playing a star engagement, and with a woman here has ruined several good men."

"The steamer sails by dark; will we have



time to make the trip? If I should miss this chance for sailing I would be compelled to lose a week."

"Get ready, we will go at once. The honorable gentleman that we will visit is a regular night owl. He sleeps all day and gambles all night. We will find him at home. I will get my real estate list and we will play the parts of would-be purchasers; that is, if we are caught. I want you to see him in his natural state, when he is asleep."

When they rounded the corner the great, silent building was to their right. The large, white pasteboard sign "For Sale" on its gloomy front made the detectives' hearts beat with pleasurable anticipation, for as the agency parlance expressed it: "The job was dead easy." The polite servant showed them every room but the one they wanted to see. A ten dollar banknote gave them this privilege, but with the distinct understanding that the gentleman must not be disturbed. The sleeping-room door was not closed, and a portiere was between them and the sleeping man. There was no doubt of his being asleep. He was lying on his back. His lower jaw had fallen. This gave him a corpse-like appearance that was startling. They looked at him for two minutes from behind the portiere and withdrew. They



asked of the valet when the sale was to be announced.

"Poor fool," they both muttered in a breath; "how the wheels of human justice will roll around. The wax on his face was removed. "I will go back to England at once; he is evidently preparing to make his escape. As you say there is no time to lose."

They shook each other's hand with a lingering grip that meant more than words, as they parted on the pier. "Well, Thompson, with a 'p,' no matter what may happen, you will be avenged, and in a terrible manner. I will run down and see how Madge is doing. Then I will hasten the departure of Blanche's father. These two things must move forward without a hitch. I do not fear Tim. Minnie will keep him in a quiet corner, at least until the curtain falls upon the last act in this real drama of life."

When he reached the asylum there was no policeman to interrogate him. The same obsequious little man came to the entrance and conducted him, not to the cell Madge had once occupied, but to a neat little parlor that adjoined a bed room. There was a look of patient resignation on the girl's face that brought cheer to his soul. The blank look was no part of her unhappy being. He noted this as he advanced towards her and extended both hands.



"Why did you not bring Harry with you? I am well now. Does he love me just as he used to in the olden days? I love him, and he must love me."

There was something childish in the petition that informed him that all was not well with this young lady, yet the improvement was so marked that he sent up a silent prayer of gratitude for her restoration to reason. Her question was unanswered. The eagerness that she manifested touched him deeply as he replied:

"Harry is more anxious to see you than you are to see him, my child. He will be delighted to learn that you are so much improved. Keep up your courage and all will be well with you." The most difficult part of his errand was not accomplished. Without heeding her sweet, childish pleading, he continued: "You have been very sick and you foolishly imagined that you saw a man killed. You must put this out of your mind, my child, or you will never get well; you must do this for Harry's sake."

"Yes, I saw it all. I am not crazy now. When Harry crept into the room I was weeping bitterly. The world had been so cruel to me and the aunt that was only so in name, wished me to submit to a ruffian for money." A shudder agitated her so that she could not speak for a moment. Mr. Thompson observed this and sooth-



ingly said: "Never mind, child, do not say any more until you are better. I know that it is all right, and so does Harry. I came to tell you to get ready to take a long trip. What do you need in the way of dresses and other necessary articles?"

She looked up quickly and smiled through her tears. "Who is to pay for all these dresses? I have no money."

"You will know later. You must look your best, for Harry is going to make you his wife. You have seen the roughest side of your poor life. In future you shall lift your head and hold it with the proudest on earth. Be satisfied with this promise, that will be fulfilled to the letter."

The matter of her dresses perplexed him. It would be unwise to go shopping and thus place danger in her way. This part of the undertaking was something new to him. He had never been in a dry goods store in his life more than half a dozen times. Madge could not go on the steamer looking like an outcast. With a critical eye he sized up her weight and height, and resolved to take the chances and make purchases for her.

She did not fully comprehend the kindness of this stranger, who had been so loyal and true to Harry.

For this reason, Madge loved Harry with a devotion that was nurtured in the cradle of trou-



ble and sorrow, a dependent trust that made a god of man. She intuitively gave him the credit for this fresh evidence of his affection, and her love went to sleep, just as a trusting child would sleep in its mother's arms.

With messages for Harry, Mr. Thompson left bright and happy. It was no easy undertaking to replenish the girl's wardrobe, to deceive the sharp eyes that were ever on the alert. He made his purchases and hired a push cart to convey them to the asylum, where they were packed away in a modest trunk. Thus two weeks swiftly passed. Not for a moment did he lose sight of his game. He shadowed the Madam, the lawyer, and the man with the wax face.

Thompson's assistant had done his work only too well. The notices to appear before the English court had been received by the three. The visions of wealth that glittered before their eyes elated their spirits to the nervous point. The Madam did not try to conceal the gratification she felt at the turn of affairs. She even confided to the detective the story of the estate that was worth thousands of pounds. She related the part that Madge played, and told him of her death, which had been proven to the satisfaction of the court. "You told me," the detective said, in a listless manner, "that the mad girl was in the asylum; did she die recently?"



"It must be two weeks now since her death. Poor child! hers was an unhappy life. She is better off as it is. You know that she was too intimate with the young men, and it is so easy to go down from one step to another when once a girl is fast."

He paid no attention to these remarks, but turned her thoughts to England and the estates she would inherit by the death of this girl.

"I presume," he said, "that you will live in England?"

"England is too slow for me. I shall make Paris my home and appoint an agent to manage my interests."

"I wish to congratulate you on this piece of good fortune. I may be in Paris some day myself. I should be pleased to call upon you if you will give me your address."

How well he knew that the man with the wax face would share her good fortune if it ever came into her possession. It perplexed him when he thought of the stupendousness of the crimes that had followed one another with such rapidity. The surprise and horror at the fate of the murdered man whose death was a retribution; what had this brazen-faced woman to do with the murder? Perhaps she tolled him to his death. With these thoughts in his mind, he insinuatingly remarked:

"Did you know the murdered man, Madam?"



Perhaps he was a stranger who came to this country to invest his surplus funds."

This question startled her. It came from the mouth of the detective in such a straightforward manner that she looked at him in astonishment and asked: "What made you ask such a question? One would think I was guilty the way I act, wouldn't they? Well, yes; I met him several times. He was a man after my own heart. He spent money lavishly. He bought the house where the murder was committed. What times we would have had."

"What was this mad girl doing there?" the detective asked. "It must have been a fine house, if I may express such an opinion by what you have told me. Pardon me for asking so many questions. I am a crank on the subject of psychology. I want to find a motive for the deed. If I am intruding on the sacred right of minding one's own business, tell me so; you have just told me enough to whet my appetite for more."

This frankness on his part reassured her. The guilty embarrassment passed away as she replied: "Madge was his mistress; I was glad that it turned out so well, for she had already sunk so low that this was certainly an improvement on her old life."

A wave of anger swept through his soul, but



he carefully guarded this telltale evidence, and asked: "Who introduced the girl to this man?"

"I introduced her; I was the proper person to do so, because I am her aunt. I felt that it was the chance of her life."

"Why, this is a marvelous happening. For this reason, the young man in a fit of jealous rage cut the man's throat. You see I have found out what the motive was; it is terrible enough; it is always the motive." One more question: "I presume this young man, Harry, (I believe this is the name you gave me) did you some great wrong because you have persecuted him so remorselessly. I suppose you informed him where his friend was and thus brought them face to face."

"He never injured me that I know of. Sometimes we get the devil in us. I hated him as a freckled-faced boy, with his soapy locks turned under and dried, and I hated Madge because she loved this murderer. I hope they will hang him, then I will feel that my malice is a success."

"Will you be one of the witnesses against him?"

"I think not; at least my lawyer seems to think that my evidence will not be required. It makes me so nervous even to think of being a witness with all of those horrid lawyers asking so many questions."



"It is dreadful," he answered. "A woman knows so little of the law. I hope you will not think that I am overstepping the bounds of good manners by asking so many questions. Really, I have been entranced; would you mind if I made jottings of this conversation for a European journal?"

"Not at all, sir." She looked in surprise at the face of the clock, and exclaimed: "The morning gone and my time gone with it." She arose to go, but the detective detained her for a moment, by asking: "What am I to do for a boarding house since you sail so soon for England? Will you not recommend me to the favorable consideration of some kind hostess?"

"Sure! sure! I will be glad to do so. You have never given me any trouble since you have been with me. I have already purchased tickets for three; we sail in ten days."

"I thought you were going alone?"

"My lawyer and my confidential man are going with me to look sharply after my property. It is an immense estate. Those English lawyers may not be to my liking. The papers have arrived; they came yesterday, and it is all right."

When she withdrew from the hall where they were seated he deliberately jotted down the conversation that had passed between them; placed it in the outer pocket of his coat and went to his room.



"I will step down to the shipping list and see what steamer is up for that day. Then I will purchase tickets for Madge and myself; not on the same ship, however, but one that sails the day following. I will send a cipher cablegram to my confrere who will be glad to welcome them to England. The trial will come up and Harry will be acquitted for want of evidence, and the miserable farce will be ended on this side of the ocean."

The anonymous note that he had written to the merchant was hastening his (the merchant's) departure. Every evening the detective made it convenient to happen around, where he could keep an eye on Blanche and the man with the wax face. This Night Owl, backed by all of the cunning deviltry of the Madam, could not tempt this noble girl to go wrong. The evenings that Harry came were evenings of torture to the poor girl. Sometimes she was all affection, then again she was frigid in her attentions. She was glad when the day arrived for her father's departure to Europe.

This frivolousness on the part of Blanche wounded Harry deeply, the more so since she had been particularly attentive to Claud. Harry's jealousy was piqued, and neither of these dear friends had the moral courage to understand the motives that caused this estrangement, or the ex-



planations that would have cleared away the misunderstanding that existed between them.

The destination of the merchant was unknown, as he proposed making a tour of the globe. Like an honorable man he placed his business in the hands of a receiver. There was ample funds and securities in the bank and in the hands of the trustees to pay every dollar of his indebtedness. He thanked the writer of the anonymous note from the bottom of his heart, and sailed to his new life where the worry of business and the evil companions that had almost wrecked his name would trouble no more.

Blanche, in all of her nobility of soul, threw her arms around Harry when he walked forth from the court a free man, and Claud's joy was as quiet as it was earnest. The little coolness still made them shy of each other, and Blanche steamed away from the port that had been such a scene of trouble and sorrow with strange unrest in her heart. She pleaded with Harry to go with them. The only promise she received was that he would see about it, later. Claud received a like invitation which he promptly accepted.

Harry was glad to give up his position as bookkeeper. The responsibility was not commensurate with the pay. Later, he accepted the kind invitation of his friend Thompson to visit England. He was even then making some purchases



for the trip. Claud was to go later. Mr. Thompson changed his mind about sailing because he received a message that all was not ready.

So far good fortune befriended the detective. Blanche, through the machinations of a villain, had drifted away from Harry.

It was no part of the detective's plan to include Harry in the arrangement that made him a companion for Madge. She was still weak-minded. The excitement of the ocean voyage, the escape from years of suffering, together with the change of scenery, would perhaps create a nervous tension which would retard her recovery. Mr. Thompson delayed his departure and watched the would-be inheritors until they crossed the gangway of the steamer that was to convey them to Liverpool. This duty performed, he sailed with his protege on the big liner that followed. Madge was dressed as a young widow. The heavy veil that concealed her face was a complete disguise. She never quitted her stateroom during the trip across the Atlantic.

Madge peeped through the ocean window. Her thoughts were with Harry, the companion of her youth. The long stretches of water that tumbled restlessly about made her dreams all the more real. "Who is this strange man?" she queried; "this strange man that Harry employs to guard me so faithfully. Why am I going to England?"



As the shore line receded her mind was strengthened. All of the worry and trouble was behind her; the future dawned with a world of bright promises.

A landau was in waiting when the detective and his charge landed in Liverpool. They were driven rapidly to the London railway station and whirled away to the great city of fogs and humanity that was henceforth to be their home. The massive iron gate was closed by a footman in livery. The porters lodge of weathered stone, was half hidden by the dense growth of ivy. The extensive park beyond with its growth of ancient oaks, the massive building, the polite attention of the servants, all mystified Madge, because she wondered what Harry as a genius of kindness had to do with all of this display of wealth.

"Who are you, Mr. Thompson?" She asked this with all the vivacity of sound reason.

"Who am I?" he repeated, musingly. "I can hardly tell myself. I have been so roughly handled by the world that I seem to have no especial personality. Harry will be here, day after to-morrow. You must rest. The seasickness has made you thinner. I will be absent most of the time. This lady will attend to all of your wants."

He hailed a cab and was driven rapidly to the



office of the stranger that had made such a speedy trip across the Atlantic.

"Well met, sir——!" the counselor exclaimed. "Every arrangement has been completed for a speedy hearing of the civil trial, also for hastening the criminal climax that will be a surprise to these miscreants."

"One part of the evidence is wanting," Mr. Thompson replied. "The real murderer is in London. I will disguise myself as a sea-faring man and run him down." After a full understanding, the detective hastened to change his suit, assumed the rolling gait of a sailor, rolled the quid of tobacco from one side of his mouth to the other, and frequented the low dives where crime held high carnival. His man was hard to bring to an anchor. He heard of him in a dozen places. One hour he was in Whitechapel, and the next hour in Clerkenwell; he found him in a low-ceilinged, smoke-darkened room. He was seated in an obscure corner dealing a well-thumbed greasy deck of cards to three villainous-looking cut-throats. He was, as the sailors say, "three sheets in the wind, and the fourth fluttering." His messmates had robbed him of his last farthing. His speech was thick, his face was bloated. The bleared eyes stupidly dealt the cards as the cheating-game went steadily against him.

Mr. Thompson knocked off a foaming glass



of half-and-half, and quietly quitted this den. He made his way without loss of time to the constabulary, where the Quarter Sessions were grinding out justice to fallen humanity. He was informed that the crime of murder was an offence that necessitated a trial by the Queen's Bench. He hailed a cab and was whirled to Old Bailey, where he secured a bench warrant for the seaman's arrest.

The arrest created no excitement. The constables half lifted and half carried the limp body to the prison van. These officers politely touched their cap brims and conveyed the accused to Old Bailey, where he was locked in a dismal cell.

The following day was set for the civil trial. Both sides of this controversy were promptly on the Strand, where the magnificent Temple of Justice frowned upon all litigants with its bartizan towers and projecting upper stories. They did not disturb the quiet dignity of the court, as they passed through the wide arch, on into the court room where the four Queen's Counsel sat on the bench, their heads covered by immense wigs. There was not a rustle of their silk gowns as they eyed the litigants with a complacent stare.

The three partners in crime looked with indifference upon the barristers as they arranged their documents in the order of their calling. A slight glance of curiosity rested for a moment on



counsel for Mr. Thompson, as the counsel handed a piece of paper to one of the Judges on the bench, who passed it from one to the other, and returned it folded to the gentleman.

James Finn, Barrister, arose and in a clear, low tone recited evidence for plaintiffs. With painstaking care this Greenbags narrated the disappearance of the right honorable lord; by fair means or by foul means, he was not prepared to state. A sufficient number of years had elapsed since his death. He produced the certificate of the death of the only heiress, whose name was Madge. He stated that she died in an insane asylum, a victim of morphine, and with a burst of legal acumen presented the claim of Madam V—— as the rightful owner of the estate.

A pleased expression lighted the face of the lady as the eyes of the court gazed curiously at the handsomely-dressed person who bowed an acknowledgment to her counsel, and the case was closed for the plaintiff.

Mr. Thompson's counsel arose and said: "May it please the court, I wish to introduce rebuttal evidence that the owner of this estate is not dead. I wish further to prove that the girl is not dead." A sergeant of law retired to one of the ante-chambers and returned with the detective who modestly took the witness stand.



"This man," the counsel added, "is a detective hired by me to unravel this mystery."

A look of consternation was the only sign of recognition that the detective received. He drew from his pocket the long leathern memorandum book and carefully traced each step of the Madam in her downward career. The suspense was terrible. A flush of anger made her black eyes snap with a dangerous fire, and the guilty pair shrunk behind the walnut railing. Again the sergeant withdrew and returned with Madge.

James Finn, Barrister, arose and exclaimed: "May it please the court, I demand proof of the death of the nobleman."

The detective cast his false wig and beard from him. "Do you know me? Do you see this scar that I received when I was a boy?"

"The murdered man!" the trio shrieked.

"No, not the murdered man! The murdered man was my twin brother." Now, say, Madam, that the poor girl you so remorselessly persecuted is dead."

A thrill of horror agitated the audience. Dark scowling looks were focused on the guilty persons as the constables advanced and placed irons on these criminals and hurried them to Old Bailey.

The trial was fixed for the following day. Death cheated the hangman. The brutal sea captain had by some means gained admission to the



room where the trio were imprisoned. The man with the wax face and the Madam were stretched lifeless upon the stone pavement. The finger-marks around their throats were the avenging records of a faithless wife and her criminal paramour. The sailor was hanged. The Greenbags was transported for life, and a wrong was righted.

A year has passed swiftly since that trial. Madge and Harry are wedded. The sorrowful past is forgotten. Blanche and Claud are married. Harry is the sturdy English yeoman, whose time is occupied with the cares of the estate. Claud is the barrister that runs down from London and spends his leisure days in explaining the beauties of that speech he never delivered. Tim died of consumption. Minnie is housekeeper at the manor, where we will leave them to their newly found happiness.









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